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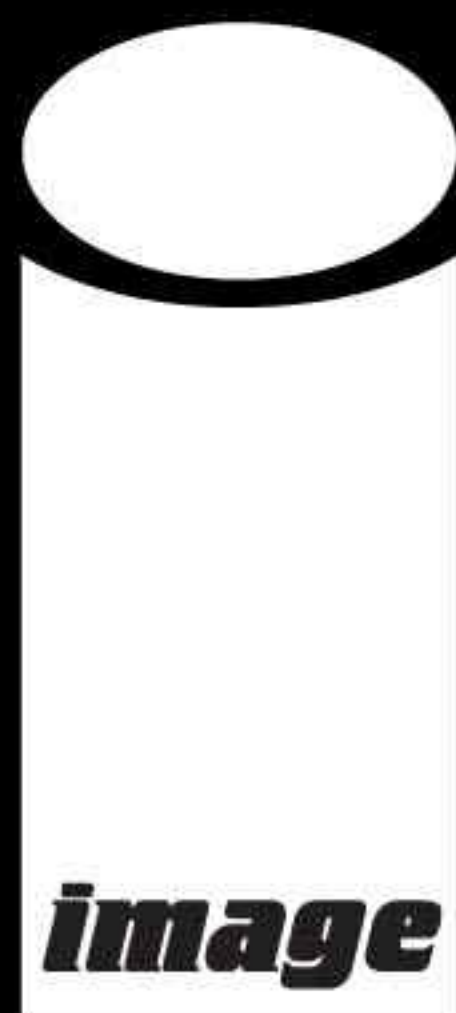


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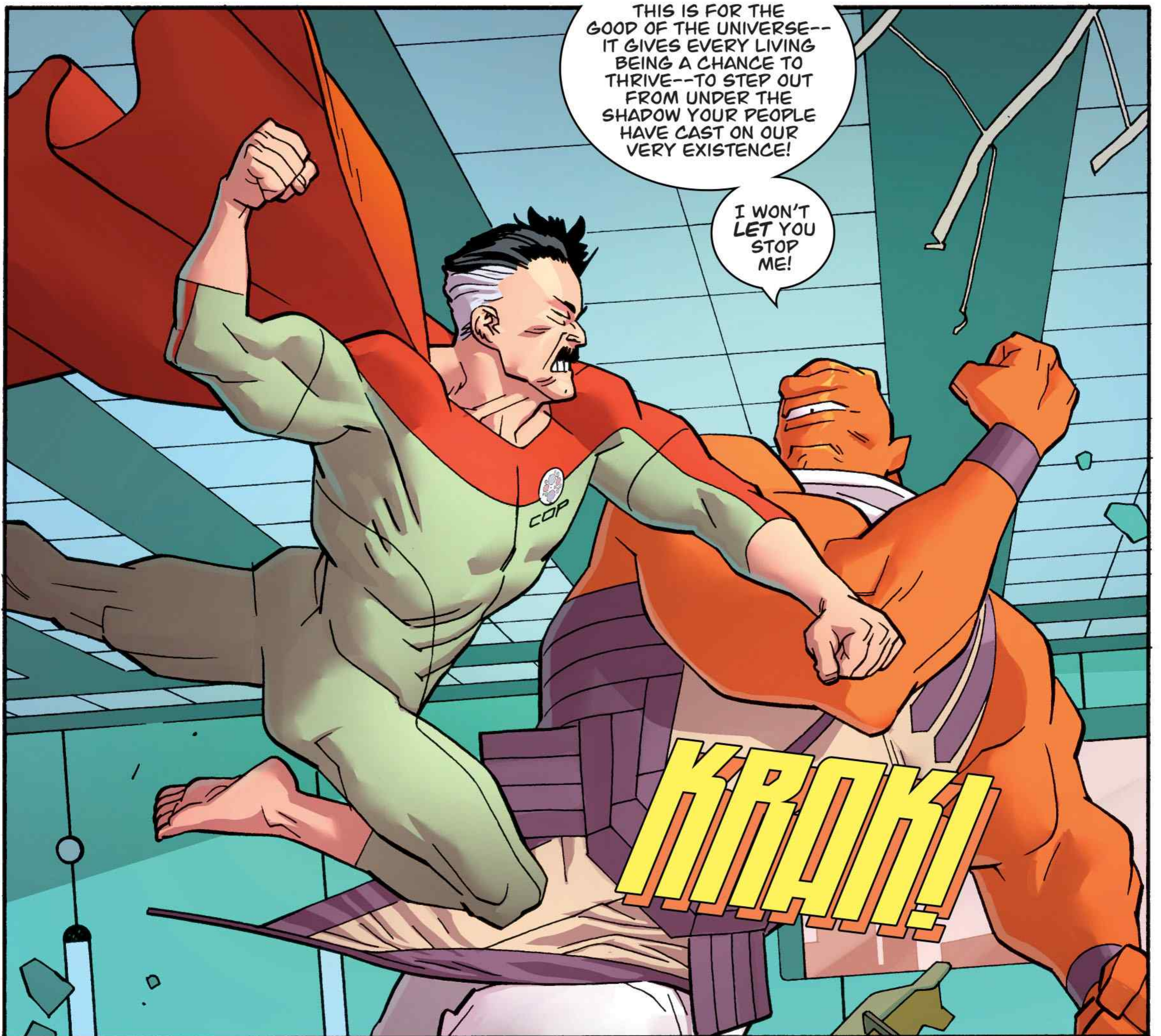
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THIS IS FOR THE
GOOD OF THE UNIVERSE--
IT GIVES EVERY LIVING
BEING A CHANCE TO
THRIVE--TO STEP OUT
FROM UNDER THE
SHADOW YOUR PEOPLE
HAVE CAST ON OUR
VERY EXISTENCE!

I WON'T
LET YOU
STOP
ME!

KROOK!



NO!

THE
PEOPLE ON
EARTH ARE
INNOCENT!
HAVE YOU
LOST YOUR
MIND?!

THOOM!

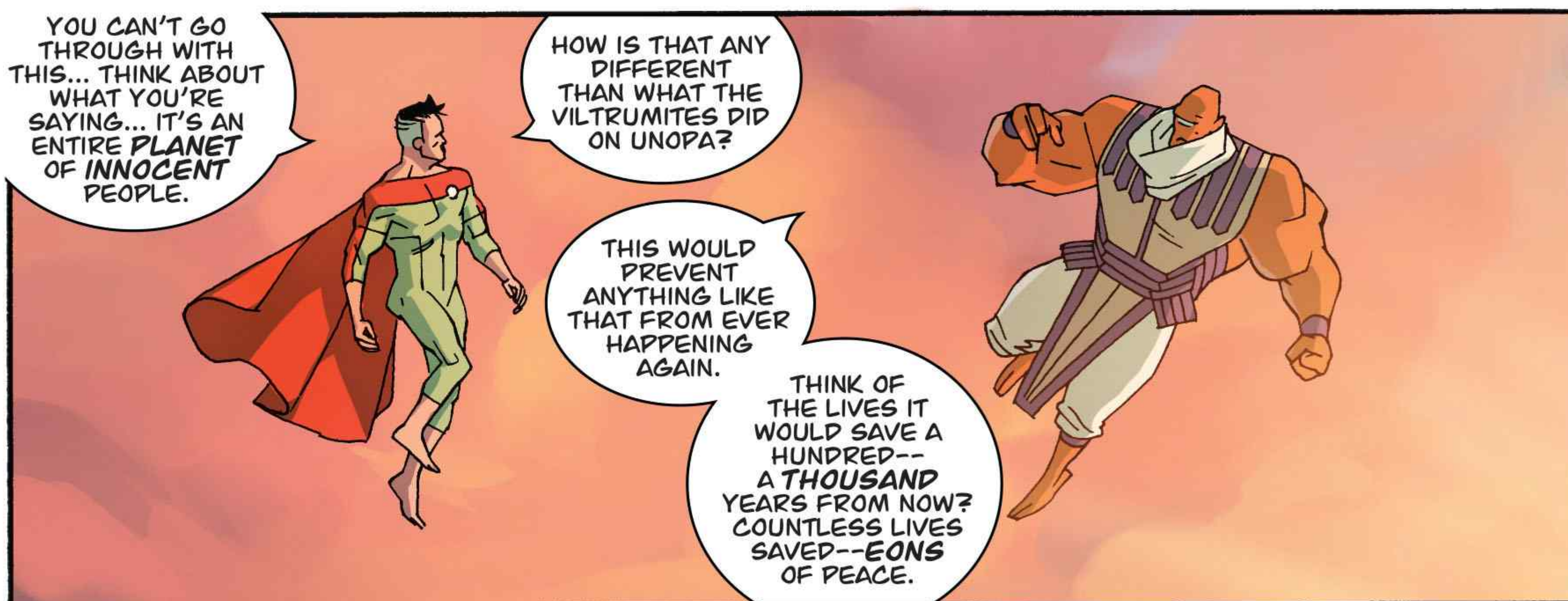


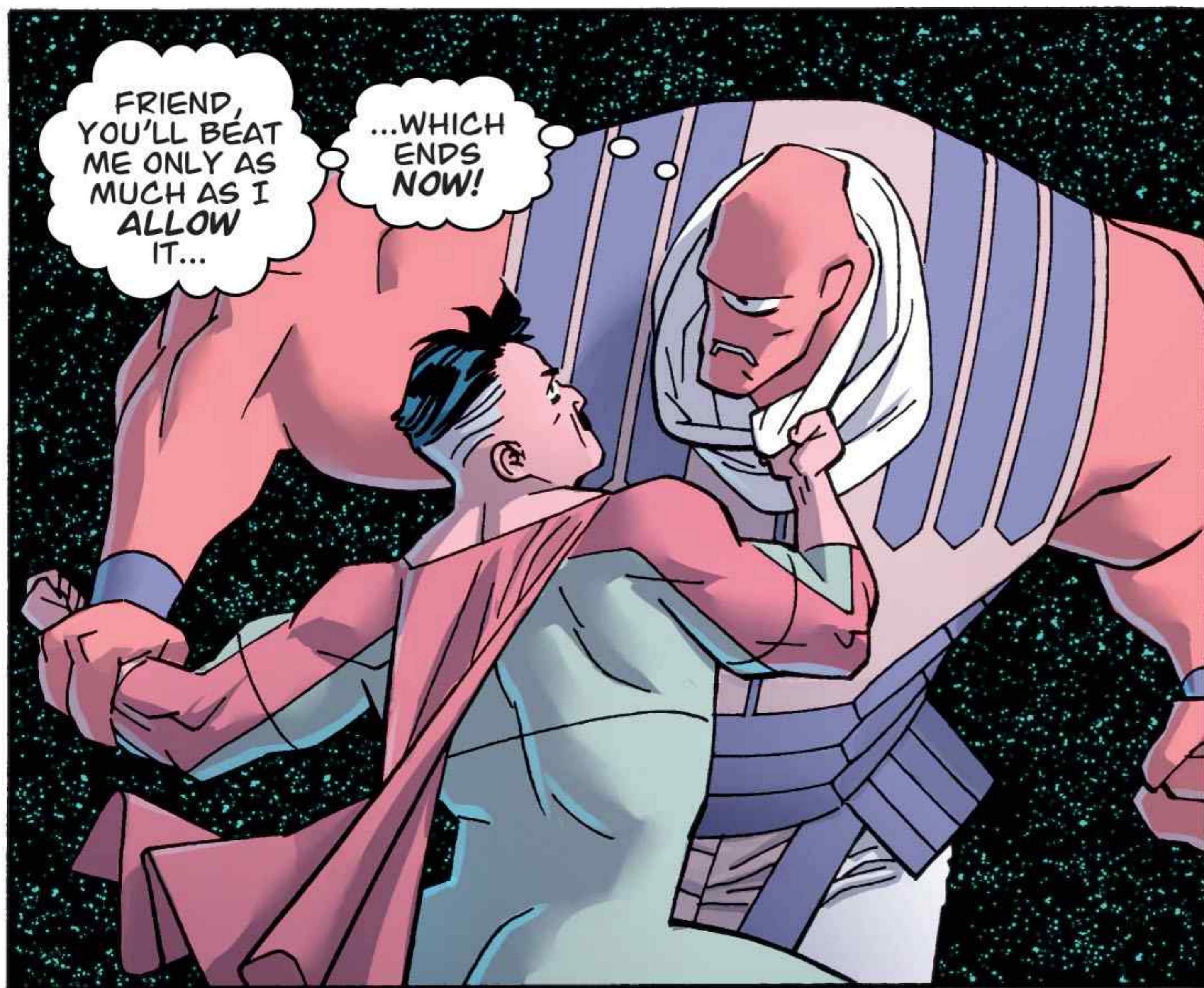
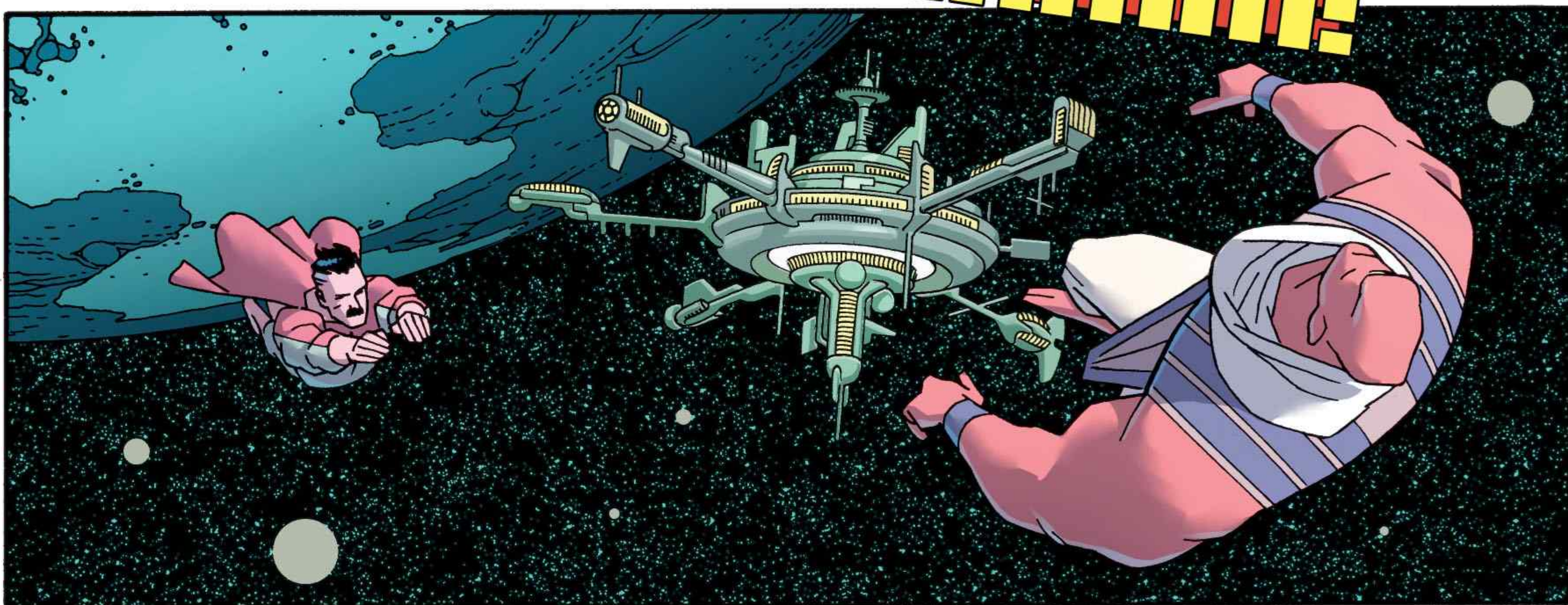
NOT
HERE--

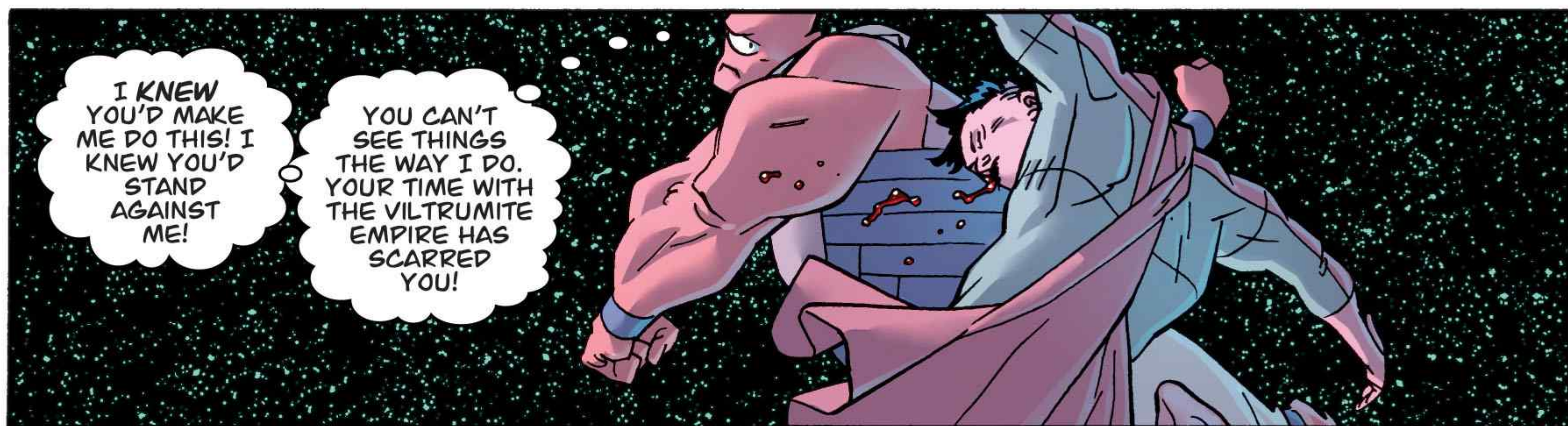
--WE'LL
BRING THE
WHOLE
BUILDING
DOWN
AROUND
US!

WIROOM!









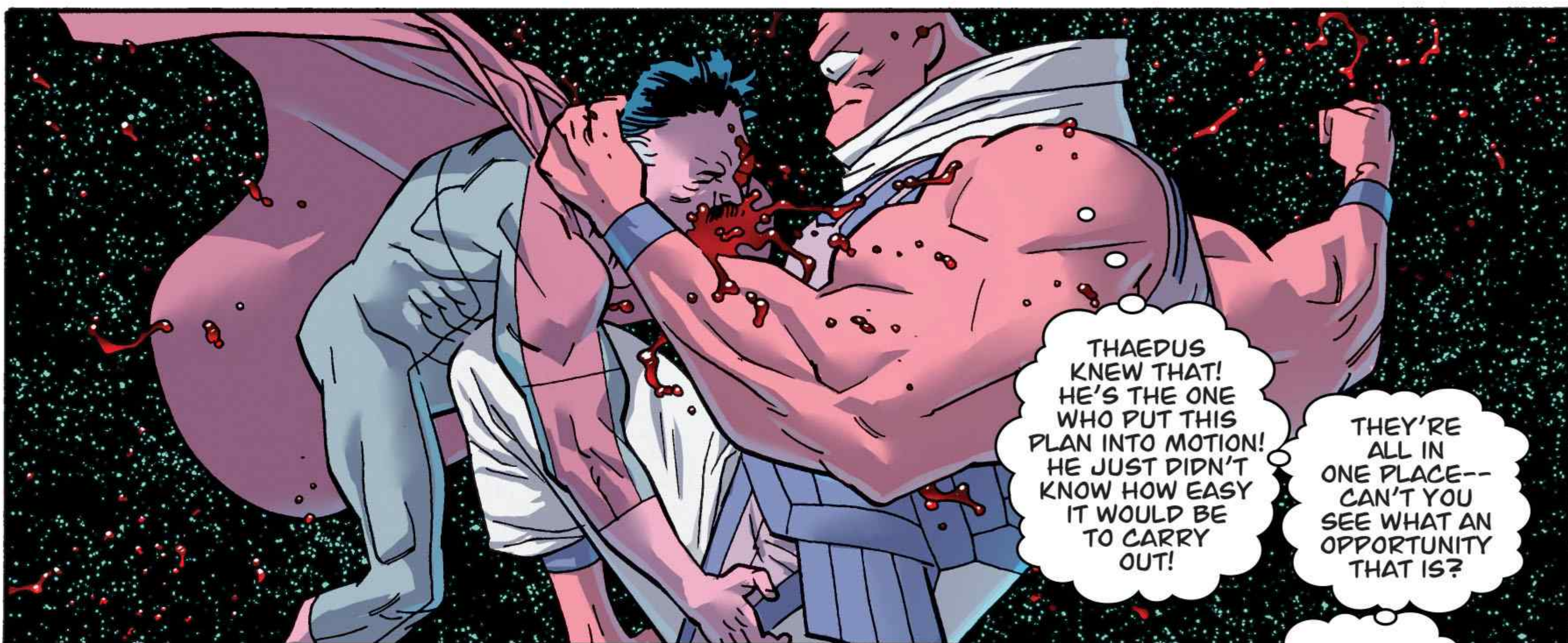
I KNEW
YOU'D MAKE
ME DO THIS! I
KNEW YOU'D
STAND
AGAINST
ME!

YOU CAN'T
SEE THINGS
THE WAY I DO.
YOUR TIME WITH
THE VILTRUMITE
EMPIRE HAS
SCARRED
YOU!



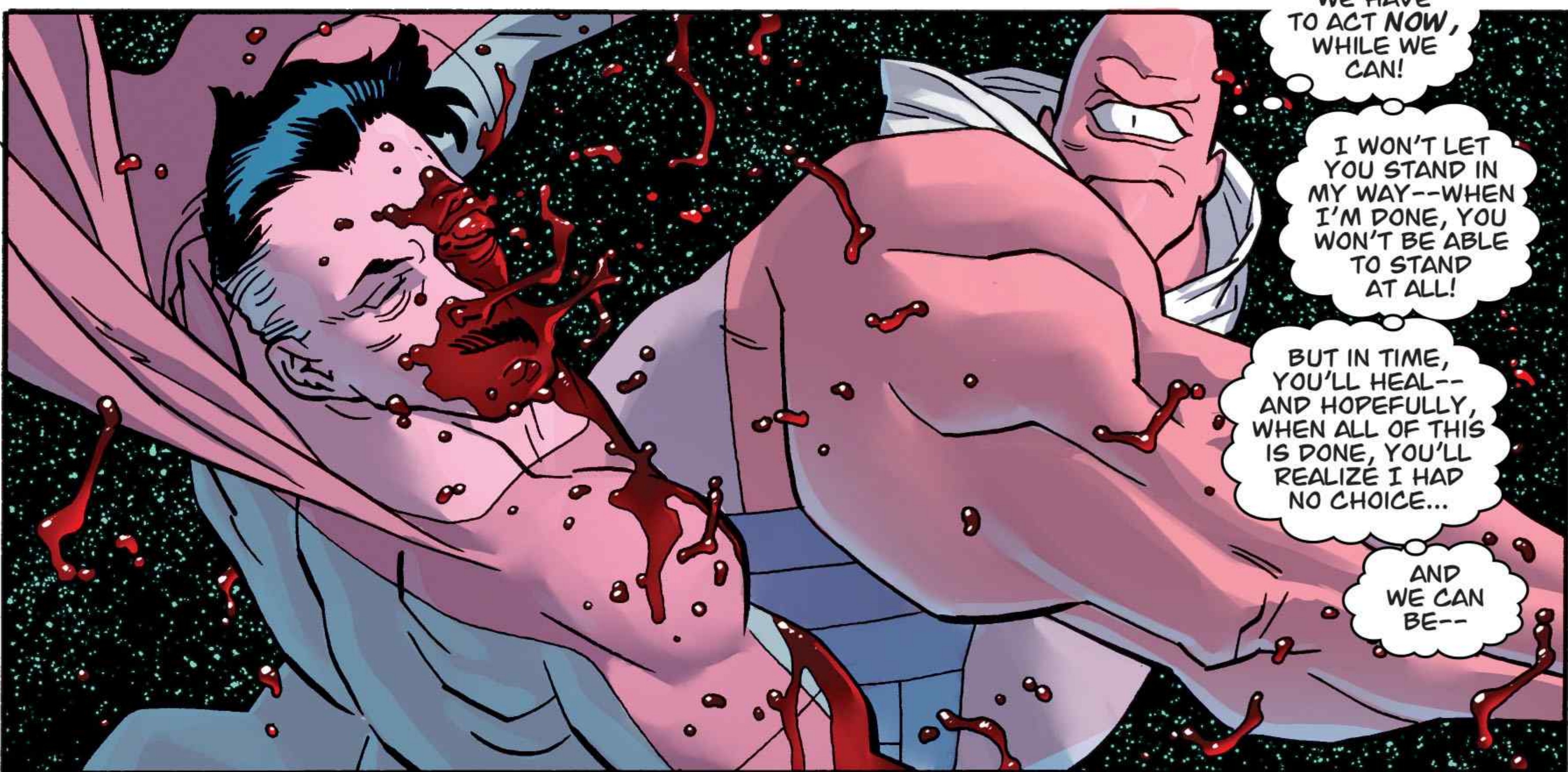
YOU FEEL
LIKE IF YOU TAKE
ONE STEP BACK
TOWARD THAT
LIFE--YOU WON'T
COME BACK!

BUT I LEAD
THE COALITION
NOW! I HAVE TO
PROTECT MILLIONS
OF LIVES! SOMETIMES
THESE KINDS OF
DECISIONS HAVE
TO BE MADE!



THAEDUS
KNEW THAT!
HE'S THE ONE
WHO PUT THIS
PLAN INTO MOTION!
HE JUST DIDN'T
KNOW HOW EASY
IT WOULD BE
TO CARRY
OUT!

THEY'RE
ALL IN
ONE PLACE--
CAN'T YOU
SEE WHAT AN
OPPORTUNITY
THAT IS?

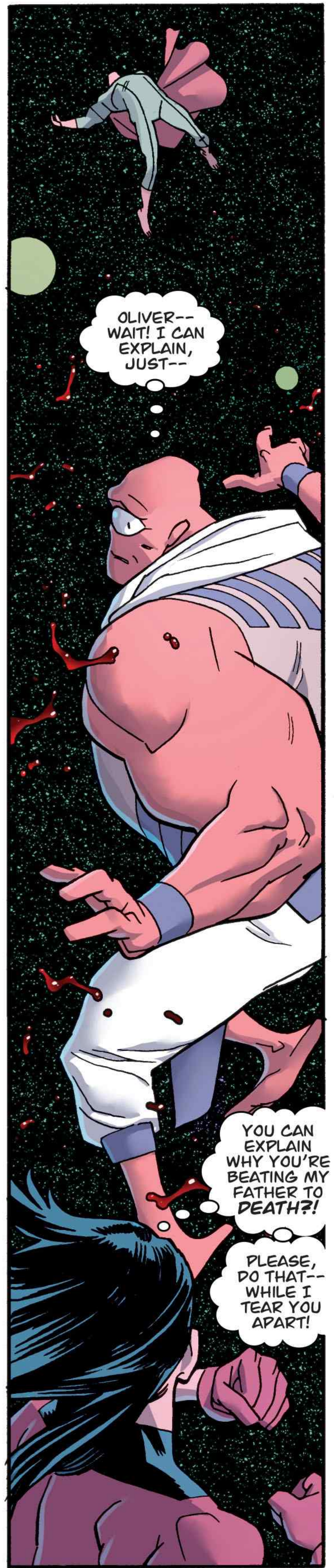


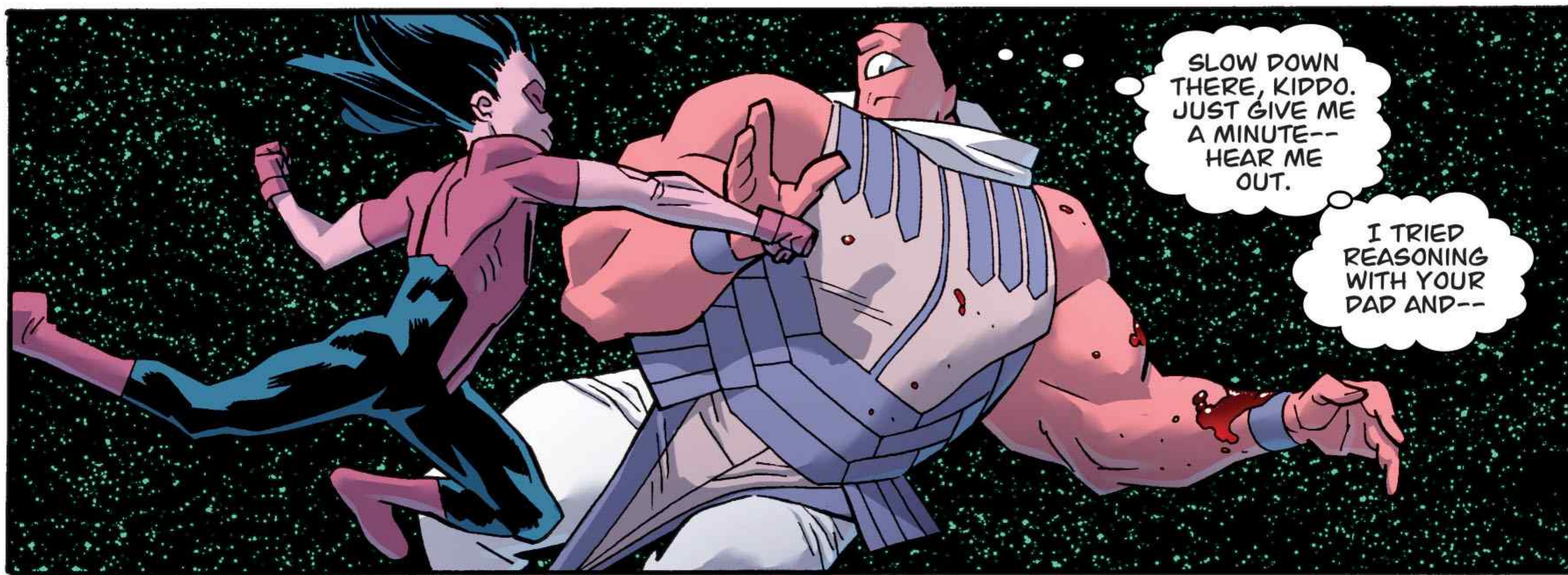
WE HAVE
TO ACT NOW,
WHILE WE
CAN!

I WON'T LET
YOU STAND IN
MY WAY--WHEN
I'M DONE, YOU
WON'T BE ABLE
TO STAND
AT ALL!

BUT IN TIME,
YOU'LL HEAL--
AND HOPEFULLY,
WHEN ALL OF THIS
IS DONE, YOU'LL
REALIZE I HAD
NO CHOICE...

AND
WE CAN
BE--





SLOW DOWN THERE, KIDDO. JUST GIVE ME A MINUTE-- HEAR ME OUT.

I TRIED REASONING WITH YOUR DAD AND--

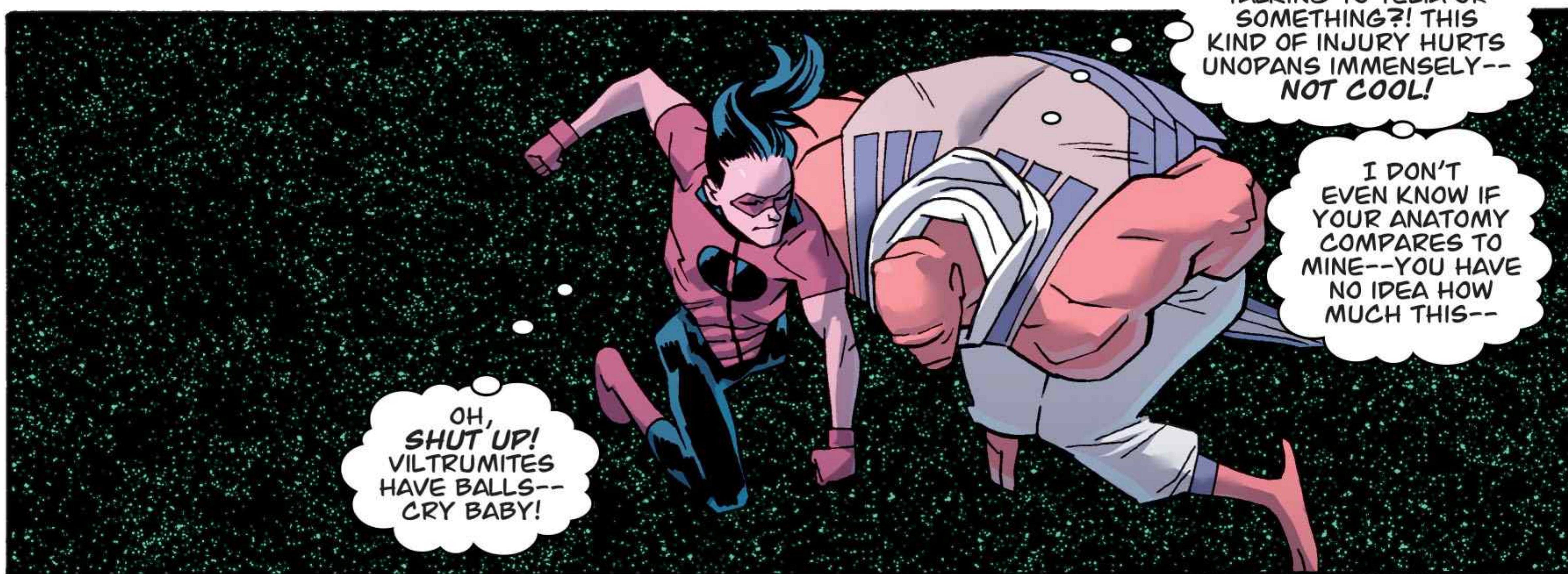


YOU CALL THAT REASONING?! FUNNY! HERE'S MY ATTEMPT!

THIS SEEM REASONABLE?!

OW!

DID YOU HEAR ME TALKING TO TELIA OR SOMETHING?! THIS KIND OF INJURY HURTS UNOPANS IMMENSELY-- NOT COOL!

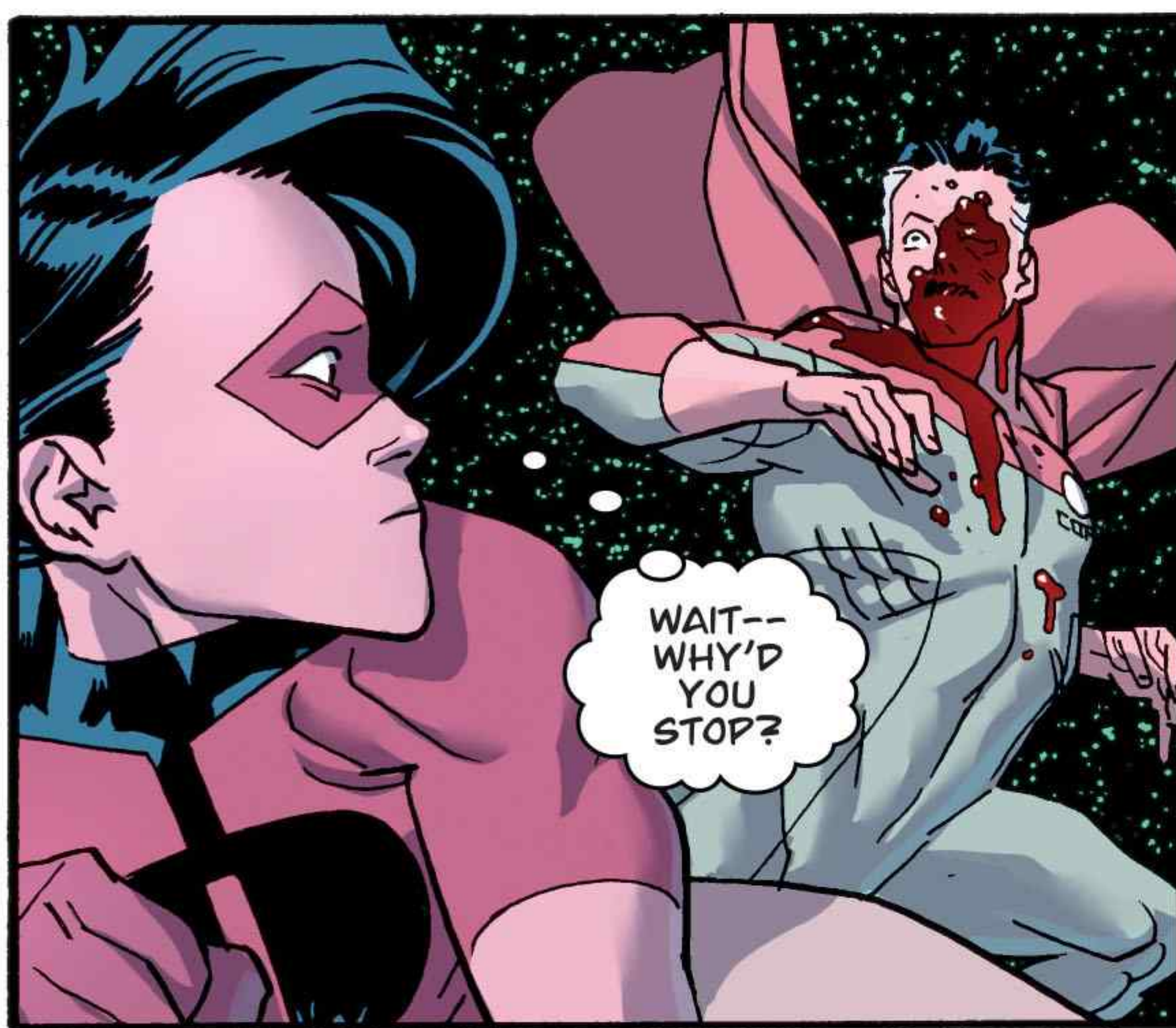


I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF YOUR ANATOMY COMPARES TO MINE--YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH THIS--

OH, SHUT UP! VILTRUMITES HAVE BALLS-- CRY BABY!



AND I THINK YOU'RE ABOUT TO SEE HOW BIG...



WAIT-- WHY'D YOU STOP?



OH.



IT'S ABOUT TIME THEY SHOWED UP.



OKAY...



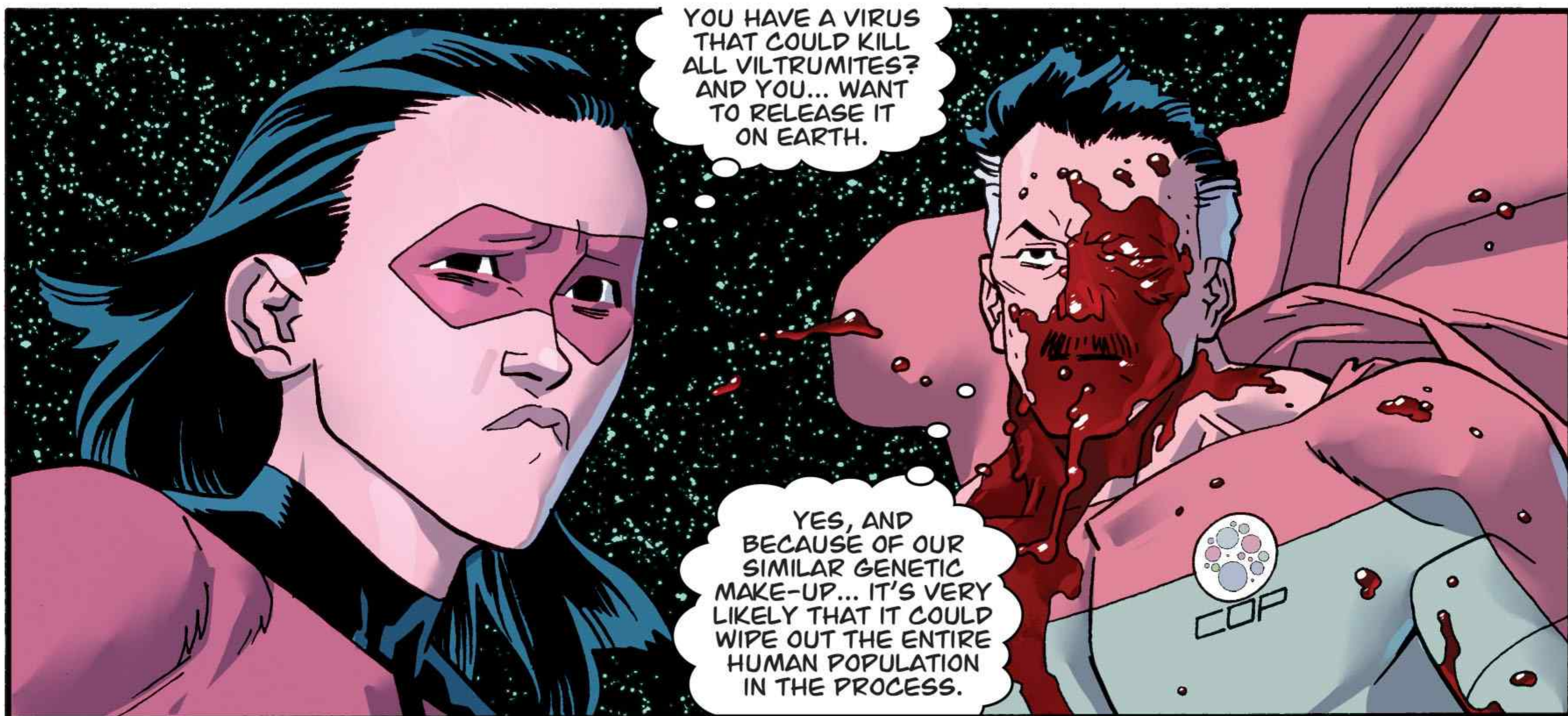
LET ME TRY
THIS AGAIN
WHILE THE
THREAT OF MY
SOLDIERS HAS
YOU WILLING
TO LISTEN.



IF I RELEASE THE SCOURGE
VIRUS ON EARTH--IT'S NOT
ONE-HUNDRED PERCENT
CERTAIN THAT IT WILL
AFFECT THE HUMAN
POPULATION THERE. IT'S
POSSIBLE... BUT
THAT'S IT.

IF YOU THINK
ABOUT THIS...
REALLY CONSIDER
WHAT IS AT STAKE
HERE, YOU'LL
SEE THAT I'M
RIGHT.

I'M SORRY,
BUT--THAT'S A
RISK **WORTH**
TAKING. IF THAT
VIRUS CAN WIPE OUT
THE VILTRUMITES
ONCE AND FOR ALL--
RID THE UNIVERSE
OF THAT THREAT...
I **HAVE** TO
DO IT.



YOU HAVE A VIRUS
THAT COULD KILL
ALL VILTRUMITES?
AND YOU... WANT
TO RELEASE IT
ON EARTH.

YES, AND
BECAUSE OF OUR
SIMILAR GENETIC
MAKE-UP... IT'S VERY
LIKELY THAT IT COULD
WIPE OUT THE ENTIRE
HUMAN POPULATION
IN THE PROCESS.

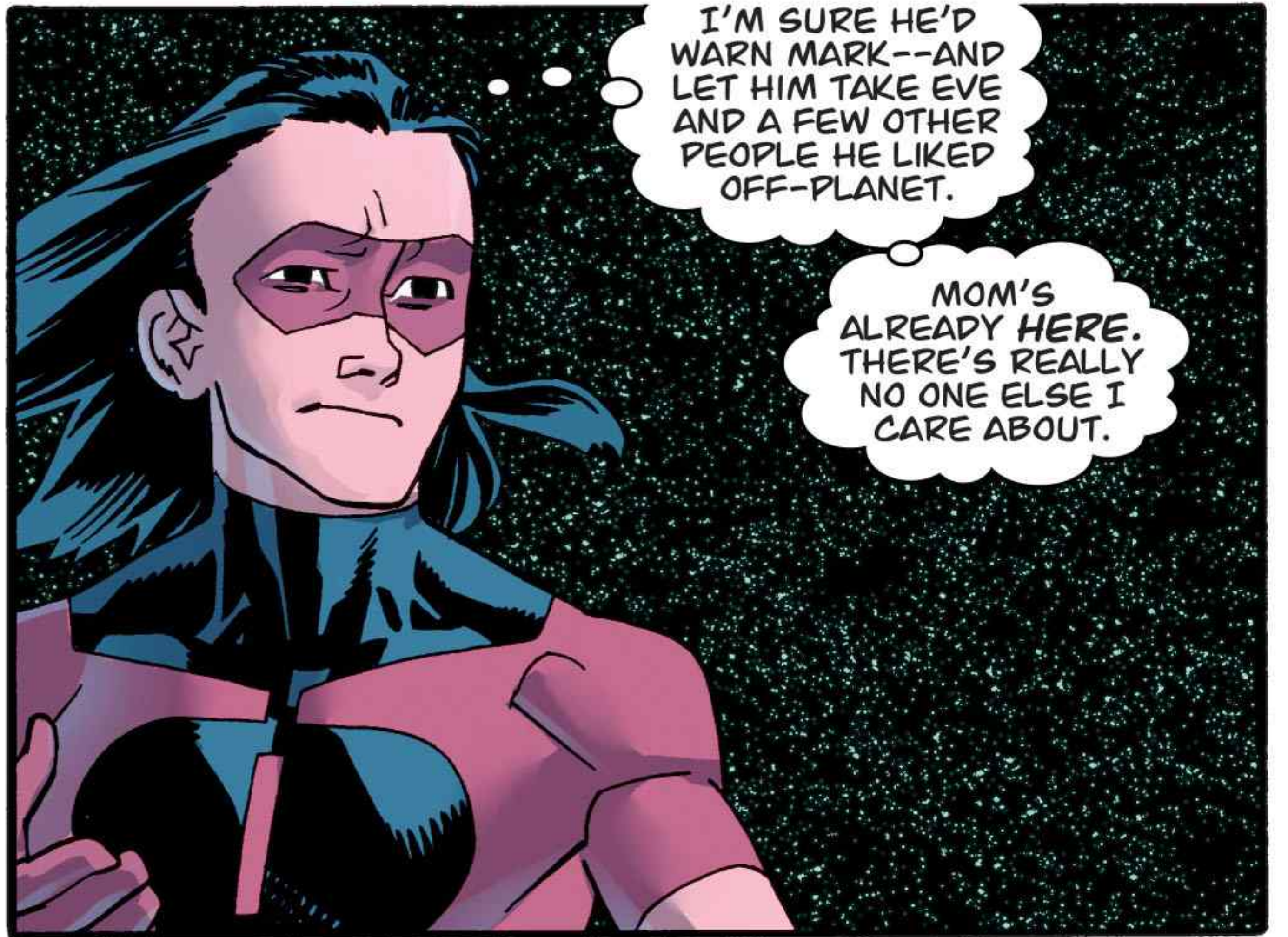


HE'S
RIGHT.

LET
HIM DO
IT.

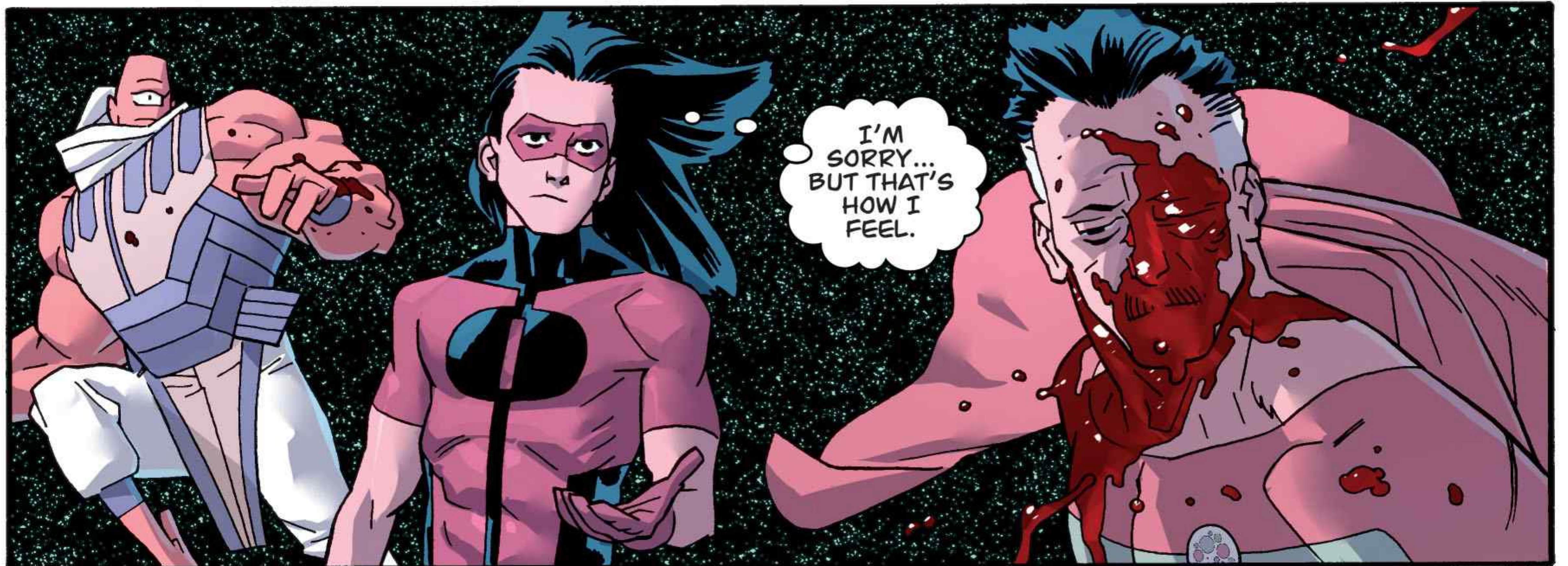


OLIVER?

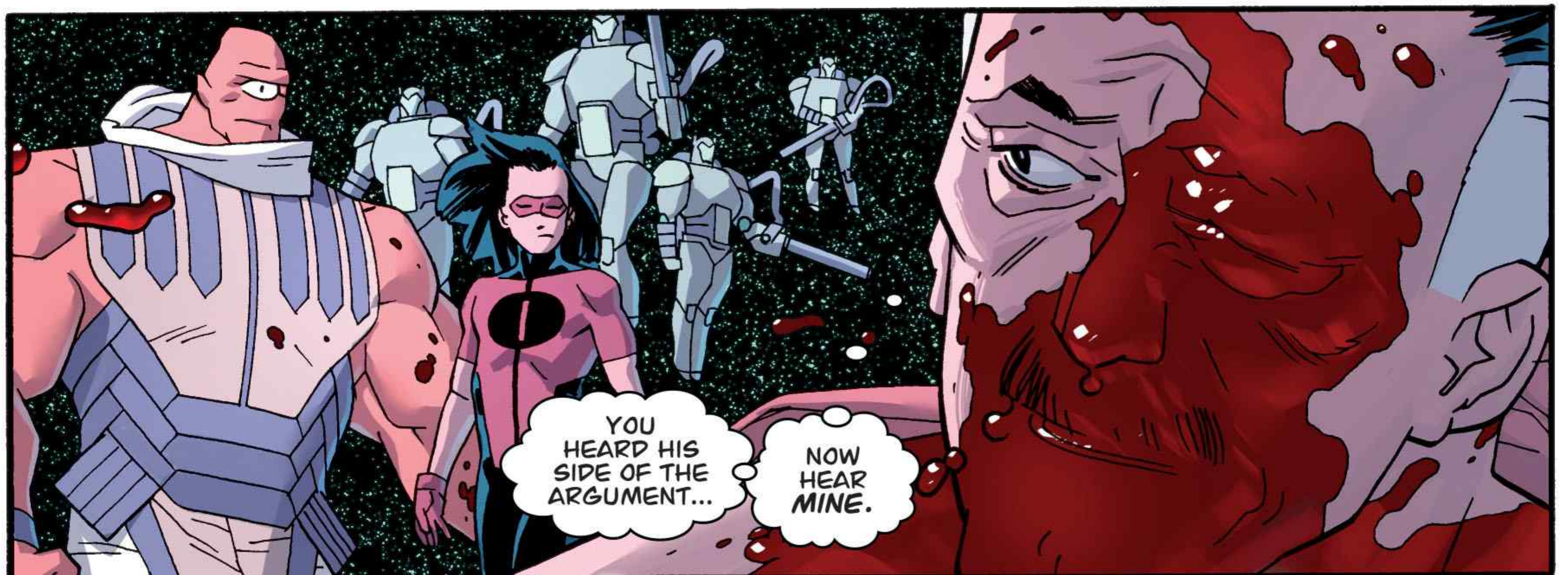


I'M SURE HE'D
WARN MARK--AND
LET HIM TAKE EVE
AND A FEW OTHER
PEOPLE HE LIKED
OFF-PLANET.

MOM'S
ALREADY HERE.
THERE'S REALLY
NO ONE ELSE I
CARE ABOUT.

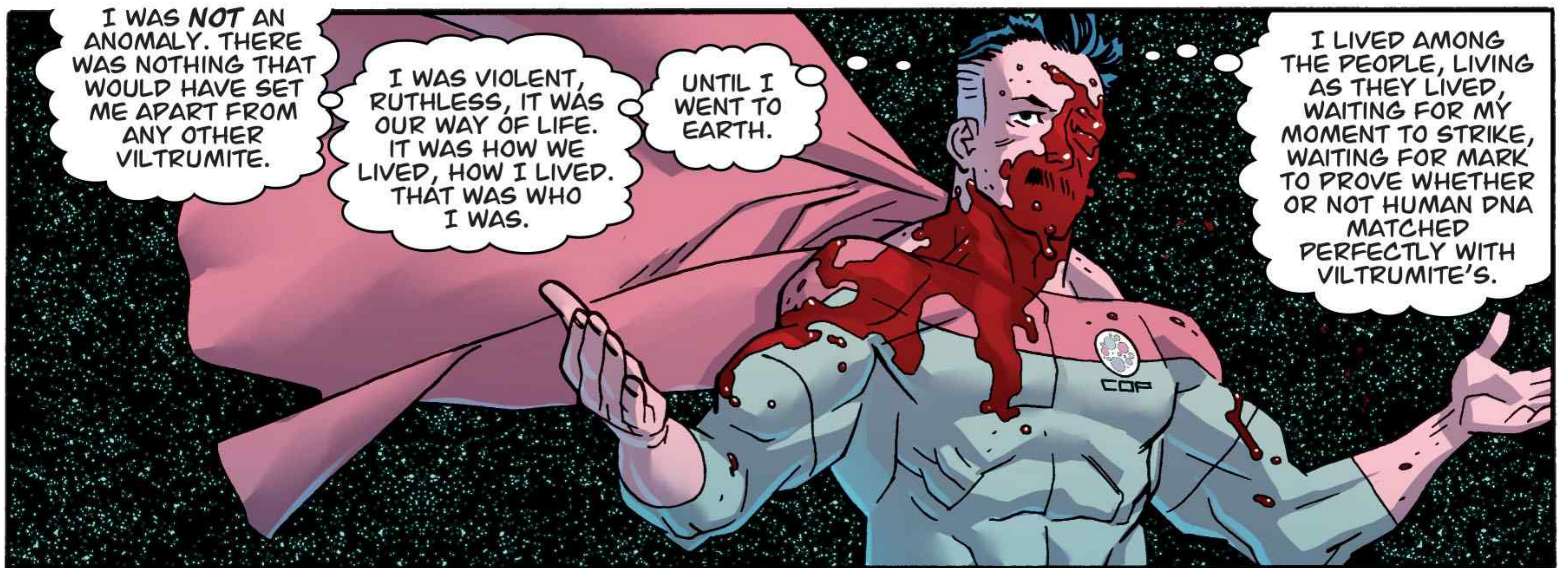


I'M
SORRY...
BUT THAT'S
HOW I
FEEL.



YOU
HEARD HIS
SIDE OF THE
ARGUMENT...

NOW
HEAR
MINE.

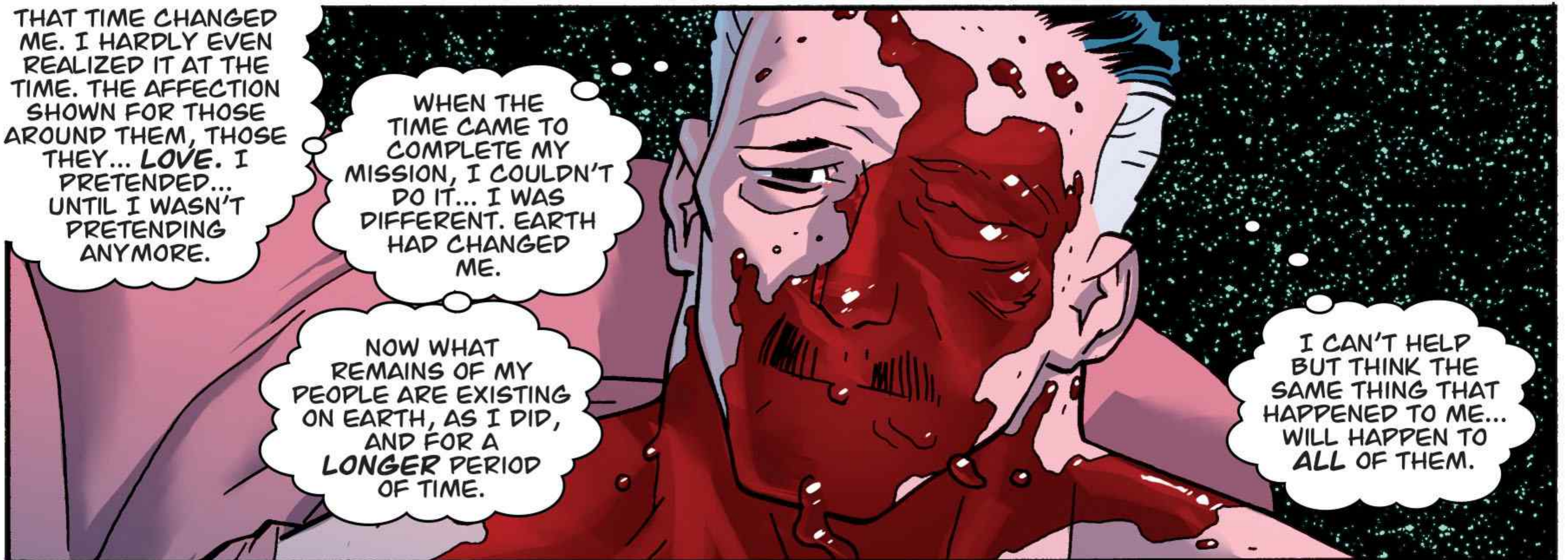


I WAS NOT AN ANOMALY. THERE WAS NOTHING THAT WOULD HAVE SET ME APART FROM ANY OTHER VILTRUMITE.

I WAS VIOLENT, RUTHLESS, IT WAS OUR WAY OF LIFE. IT WAS HOW WE LIVED, HOW I LIVED. THAT WAS WHO I WAS.

UNTIL I WENT TO EARTH.

I LIVED AMONG THE PEOPLE, LIVING AS THEY LIVED, WAITING FOR MY MOMENT TO STRIKE, WAITING FOR MARK TO PROVE WHETHER OR NOT HUMAN DNA MATCHED PERFECTLY WITH VILTRUMITE'S.



THAT TIME CHANGED ME. I HARDLY EVEN REALIZED IT AT THE TIME. THE AFFECTION SHOWN FOR THOSE AROUND THEM, THOSE THEY... LOVE. I PRETENDED... UNTIL I WASN'T PRETENDING ANYMORE.

WHEN THE TIME CAME TO COMPLETE MY MISSION, I COULDN'T DO IT... I WAS DIFFERENT. EARTH HAD CHANGED ME.

NOW WHAT REMAINS OF MY PEOPLE ARE EXISTING ON EARTH, AS I DID, AND FOR A LONGER PERIOD OF TIME.

I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK THE SAME THING THAT HAPPENED TO ME... WILL HAPPEN TO ALL OF THEM.



AND WHAT IF THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN? WE WILL HAVE SQUANDERED OUR ONLY CHANCE TO RID OURSELVES OF THIS THREAT TO OUR ENTIRE UNIVERSE.

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHAT YOUR PEOPLE ARE CAPABLE OF? OUR EFFORTS TO DESTROY THEM IN THE RECENT WAR?

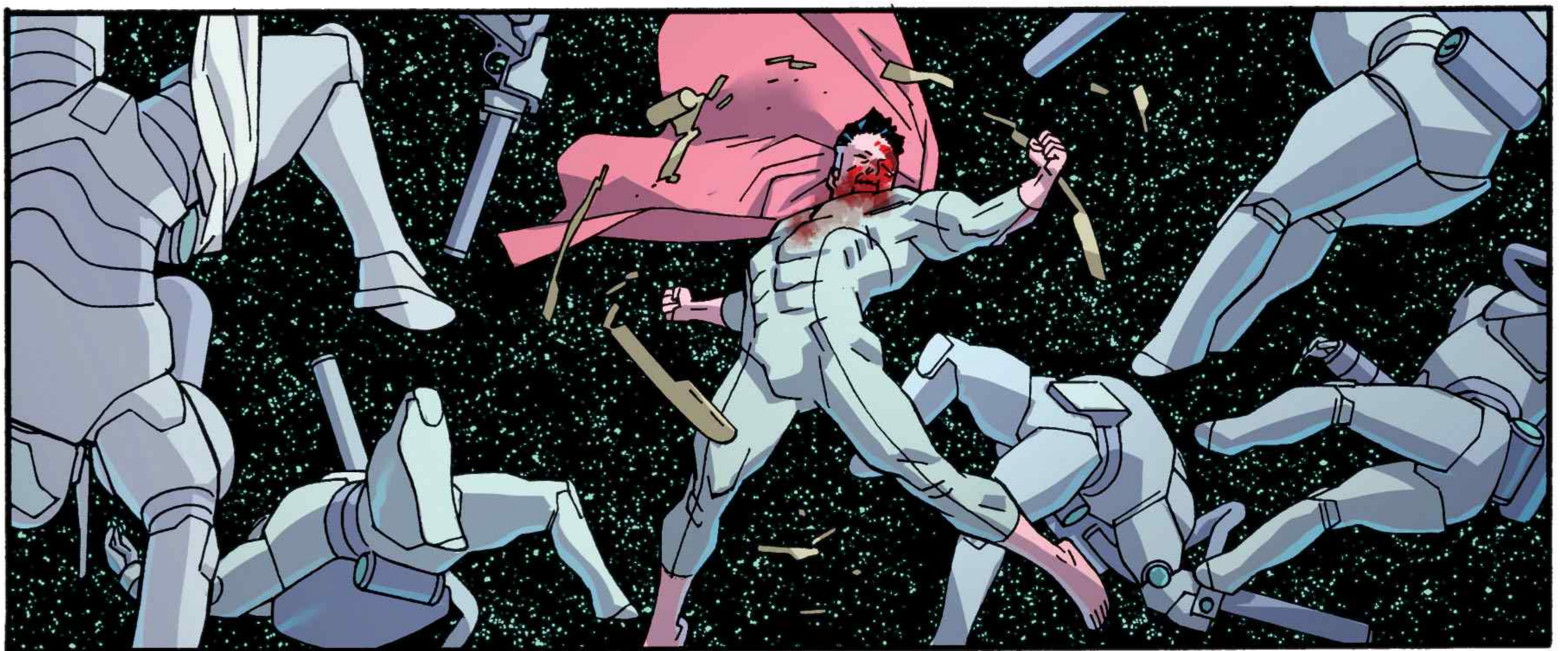
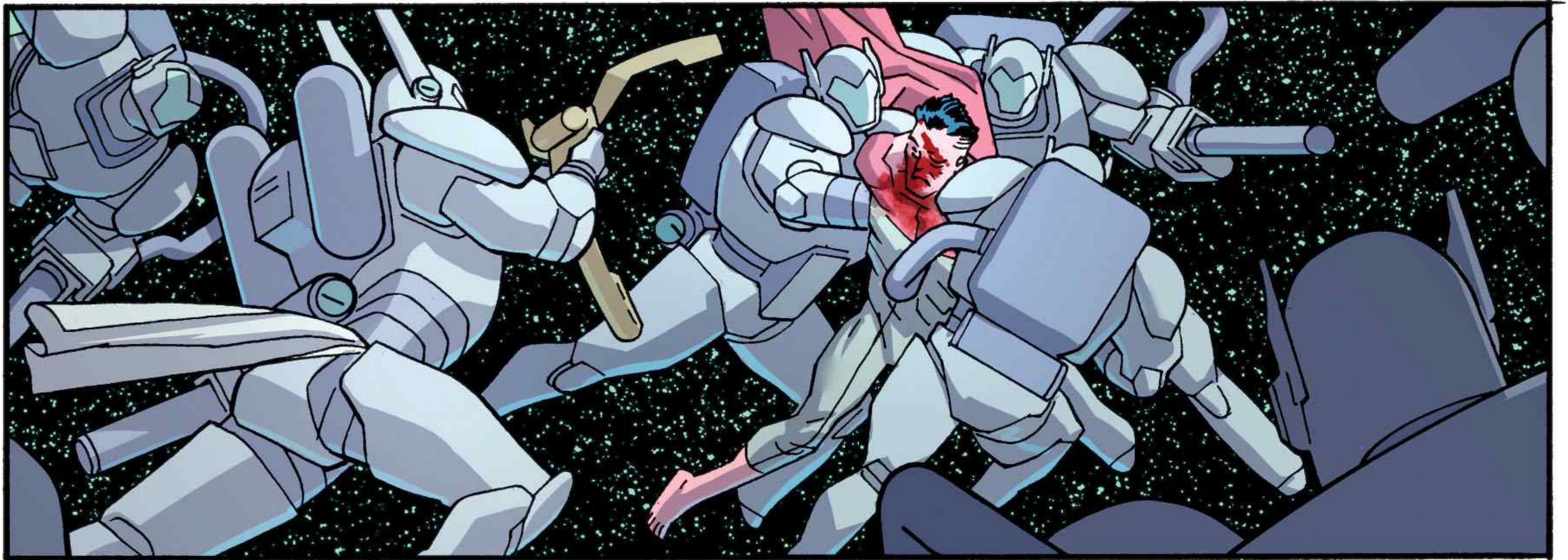
I'M CONFUSED, MY FRIEND. ARE YOU TRYING TO SAVE THE INNOCENT PEOPLE OF EARTH... OR YOUR VILTRUMITE BRETHREN?

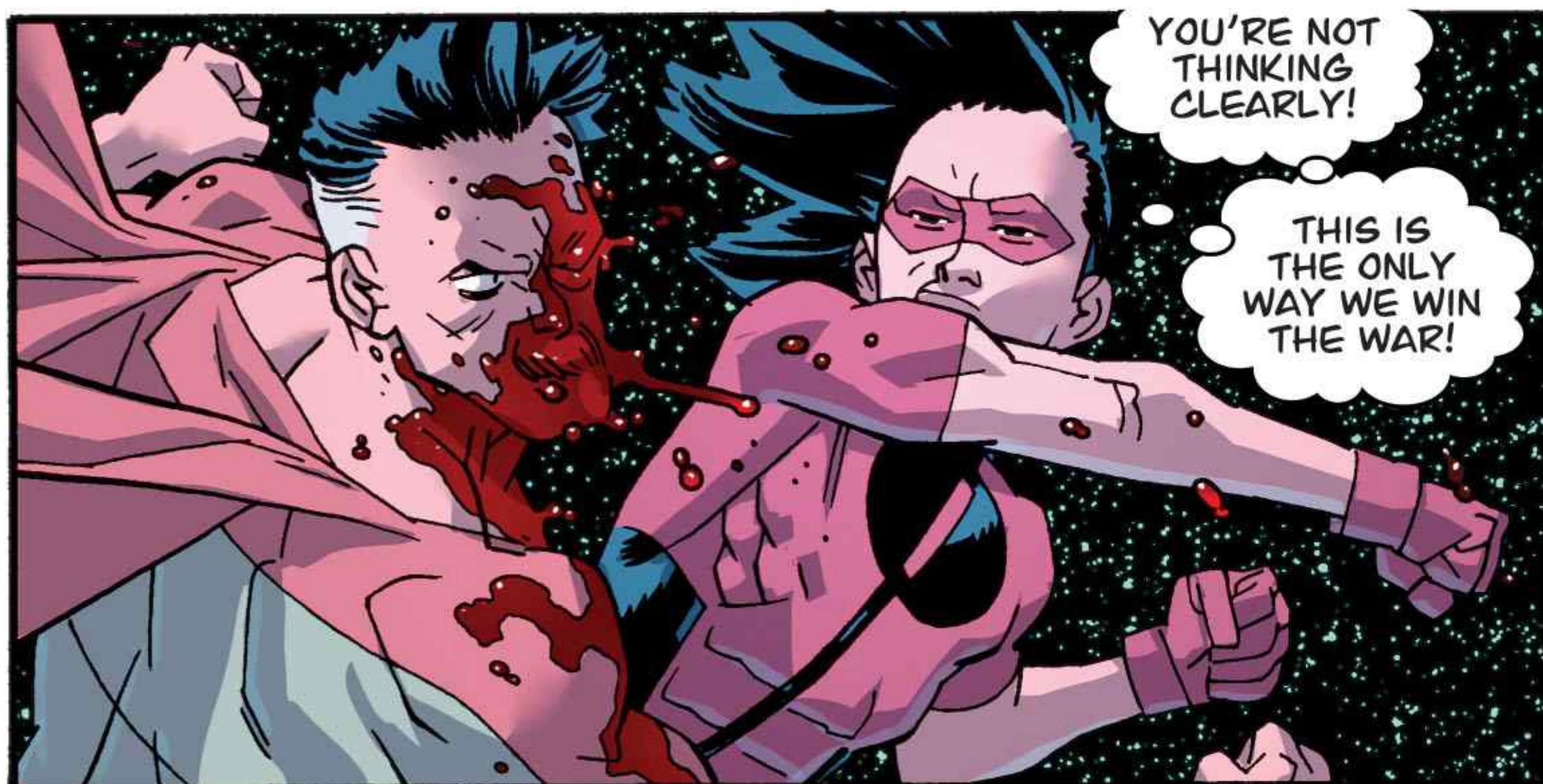
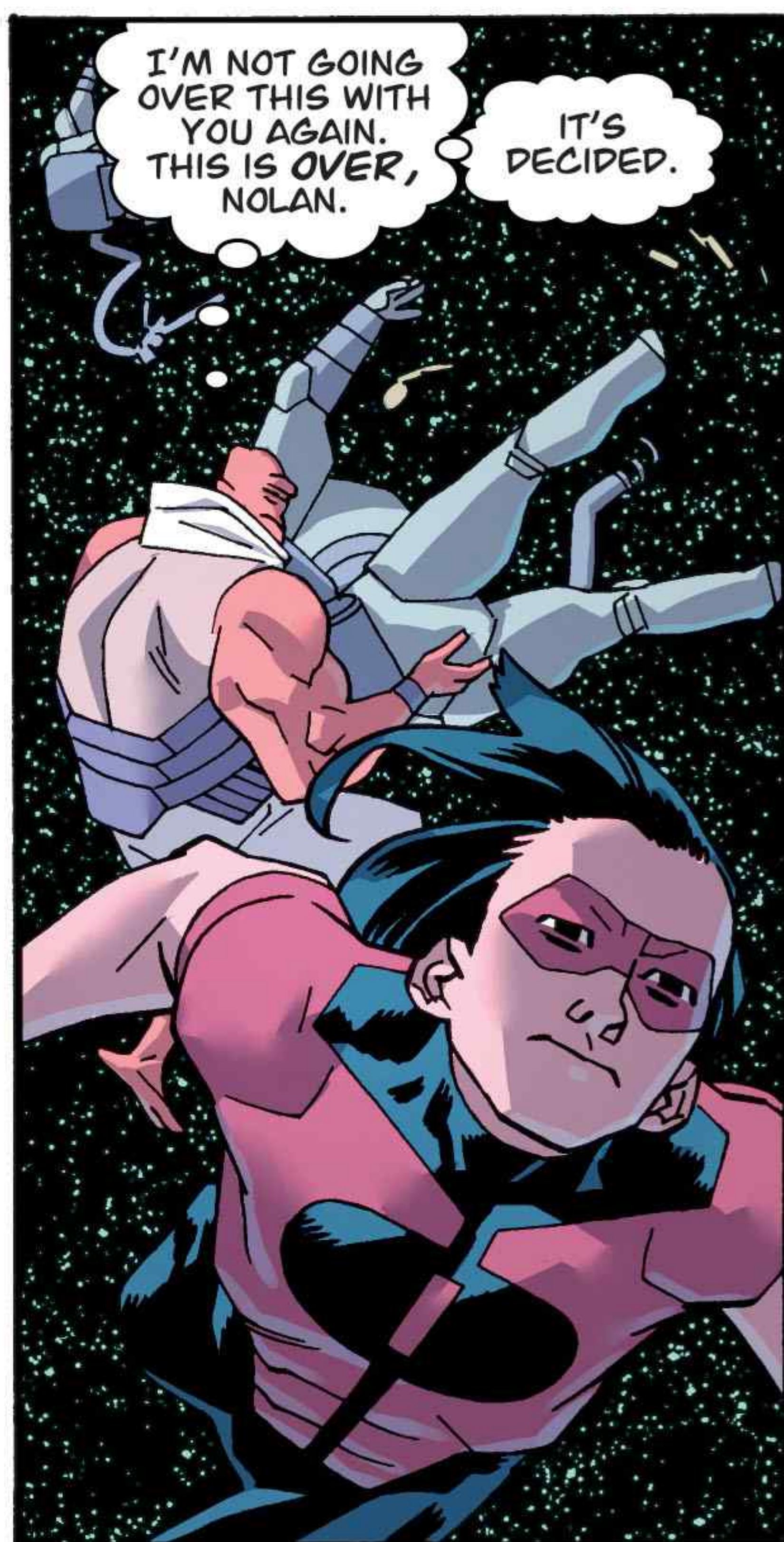
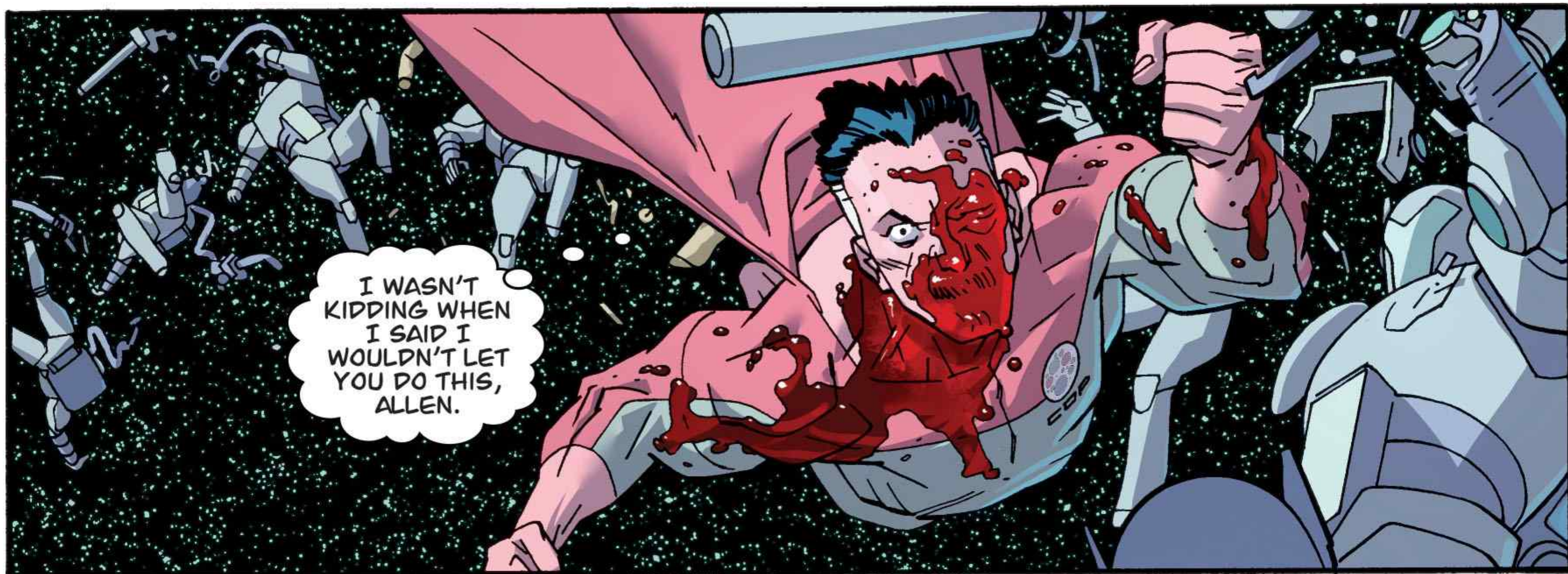


WHAT YOU SAY ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF EARTH IS TRUE OF MY MOTHER, AND VERY FEW OTHERS. I HAVE READ THE ENTIRETY OF THEIR WRITTEN HISTORY... MY OPINION OF THEM DIFFERS FROM YOURS... SUBSTANTIALLY.

THEY'RE ASSHOLES. THEY CARE ONLY FOR TAKING WHAT THEY DON'T HAVE FROM THOSE THAT DO. THEY'RE A SMALL AND PETTY PEOPLE WHO ARE NEARLY AS ADDICTED TO VIOLENCE AS OUR RACE IS.

YOU BELIEVE VILTRUMITES WILL LEARN FROM THEM, AND BE MADE BETTER BY IT. I'M SORRY, FATHER... BUT... YOU'RE WRONG.



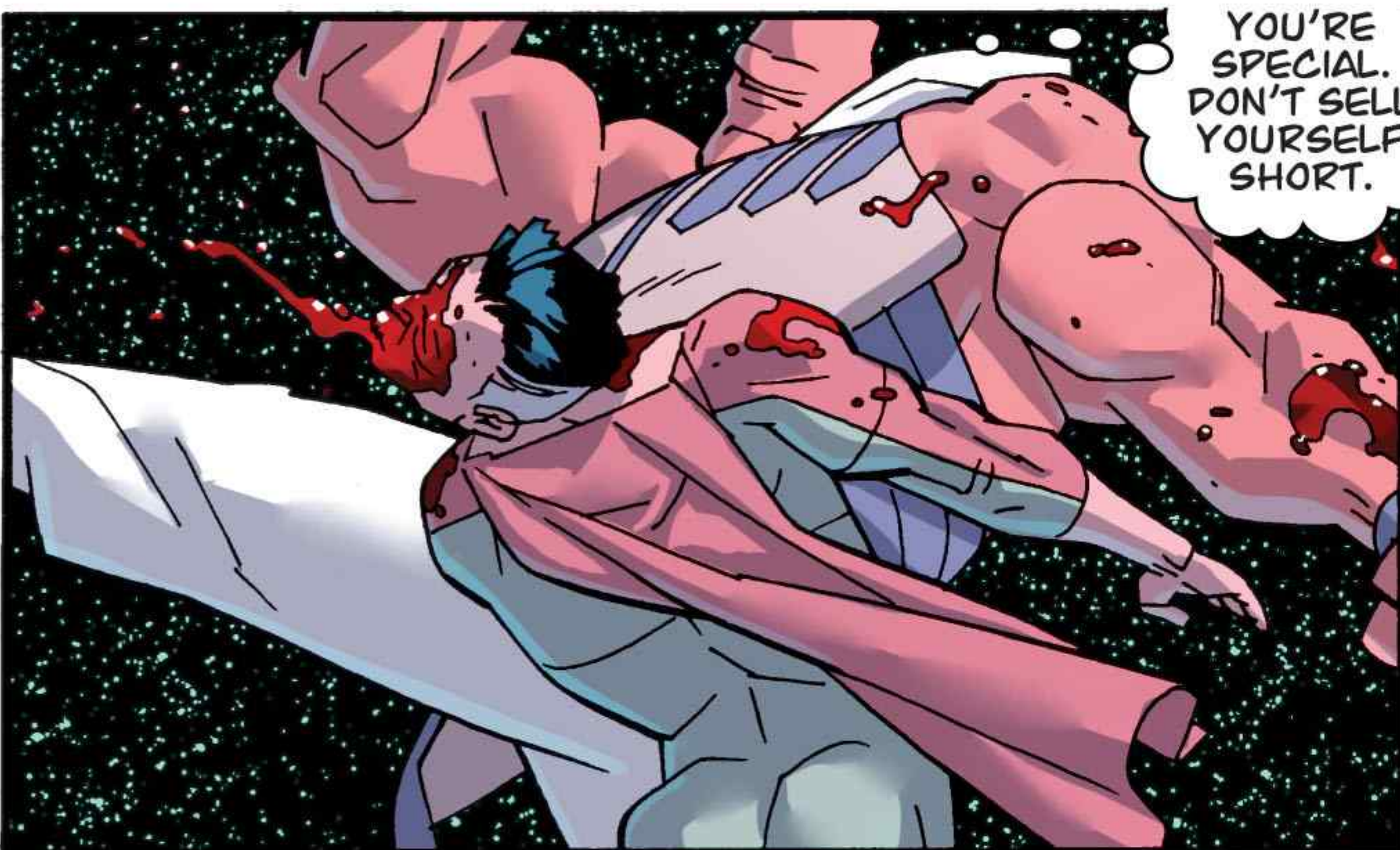


WELL, THAT
WAS TOUCHING...
YOU HAVE
CHANGED.

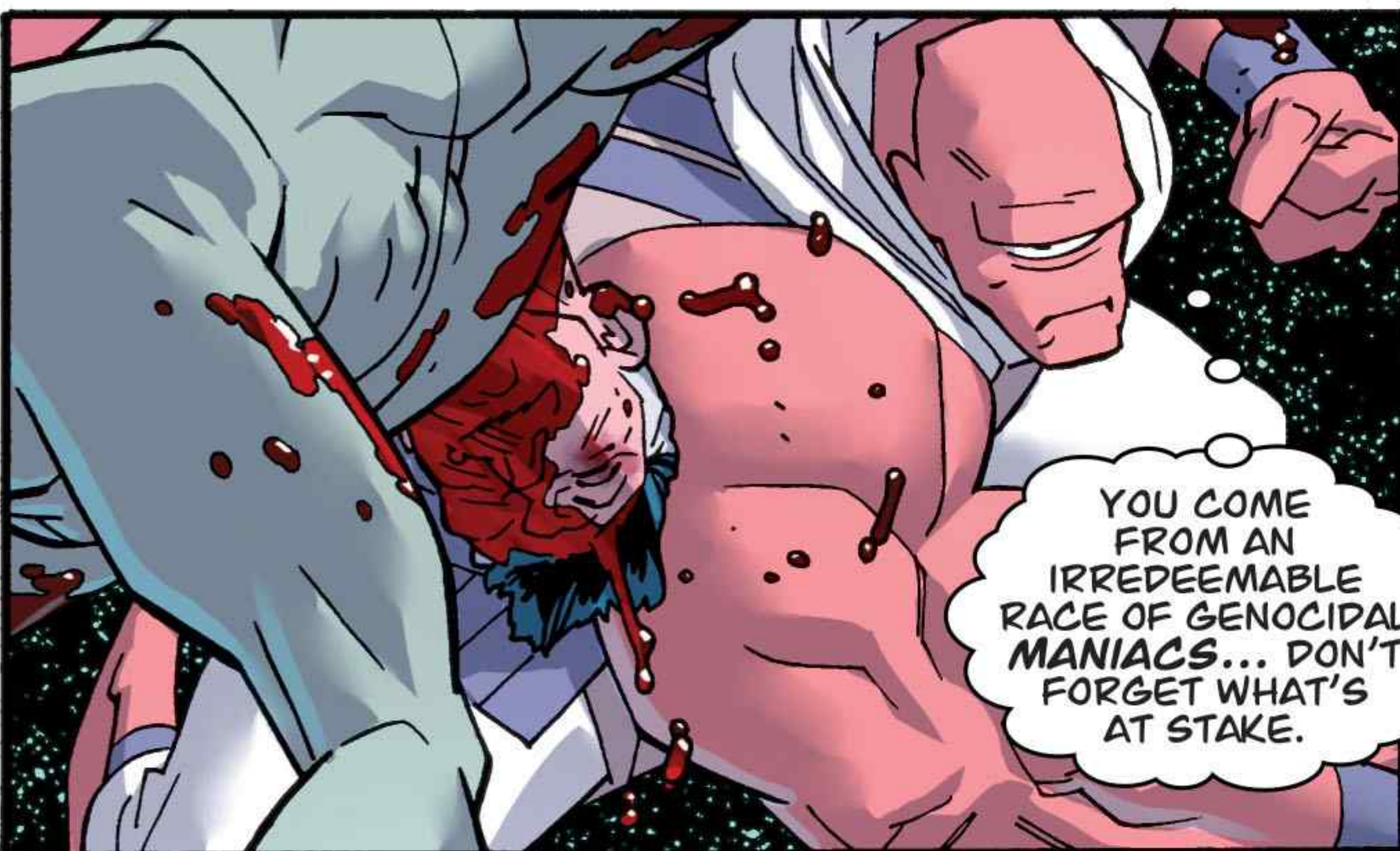
STILL, THOUGH...
I'M **CONVINCED**
YOU'RE AN ANOMALY.
I JUST CAN'T SEE
GRAND REGENT THRAGG
MARRYING A NICE
LITTLE HUMAN WOMAN
AND SETTLING
DOWN.



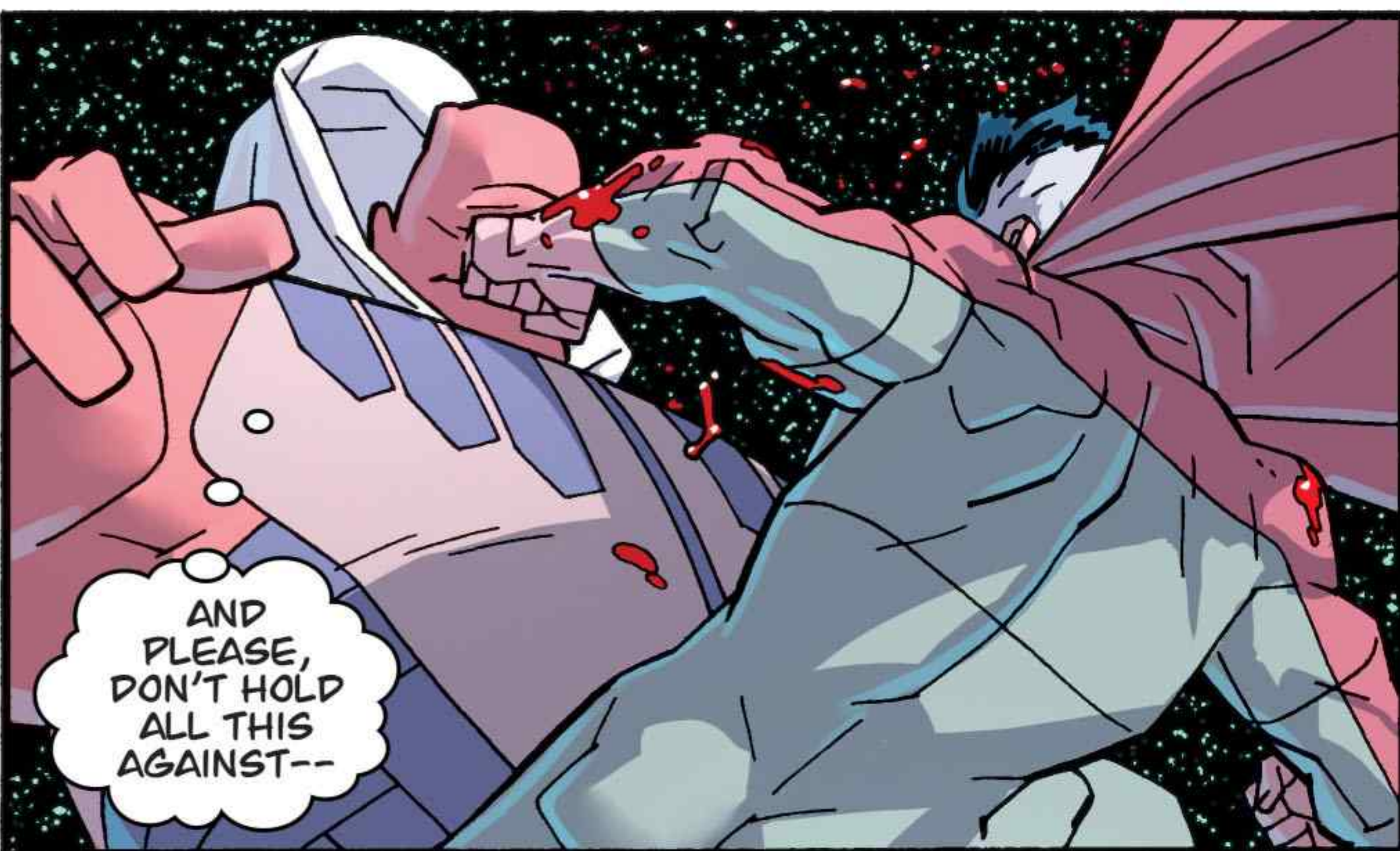
YOU'RE
SPECIAL.
DON'T SELL
YOURSELF
SHORT.



YOU COME
FROM AN
IRREDEEMABLE
RACE OF GENOCIDAL
MANIACS... DON'T
FORGET WHAT'S
AT STAKE.

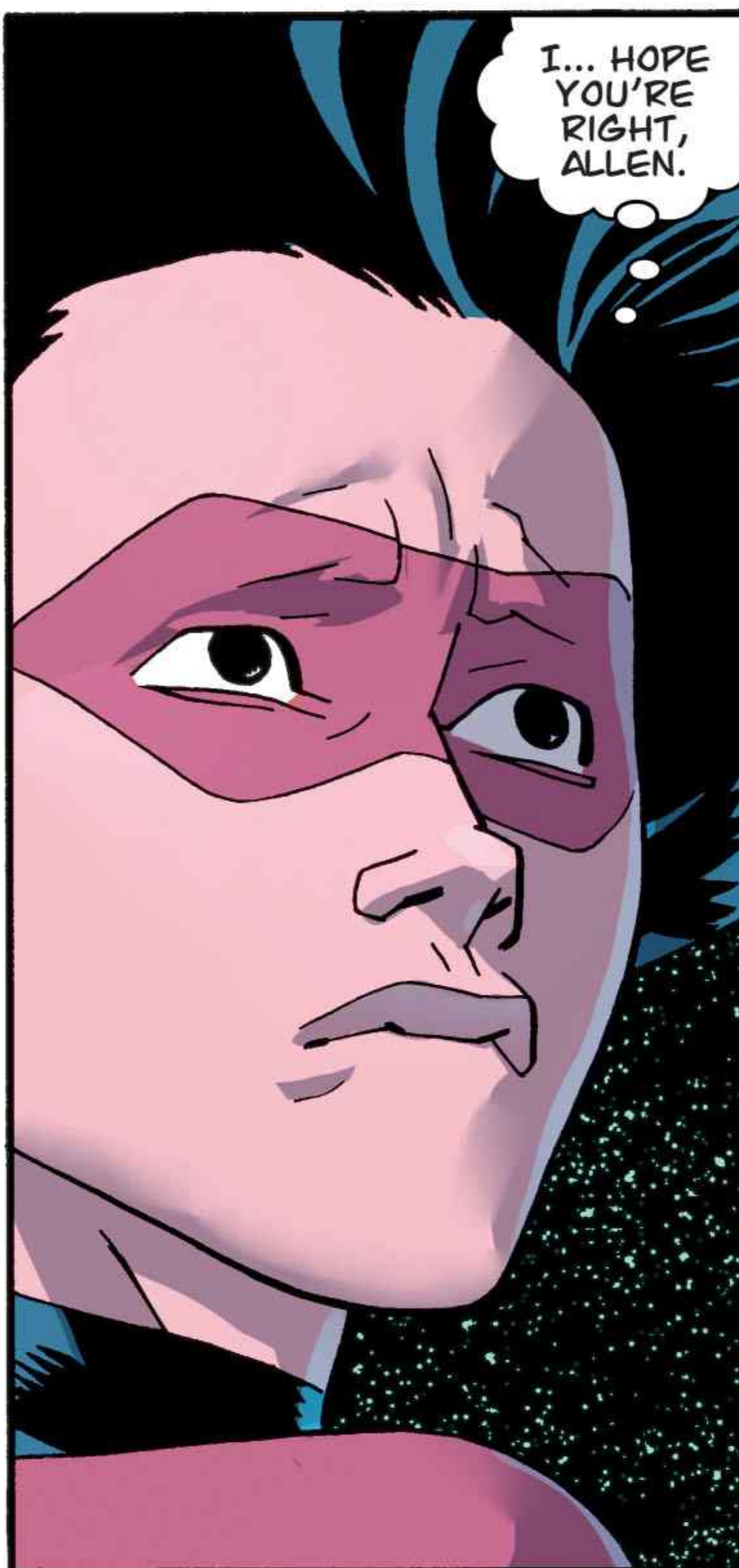
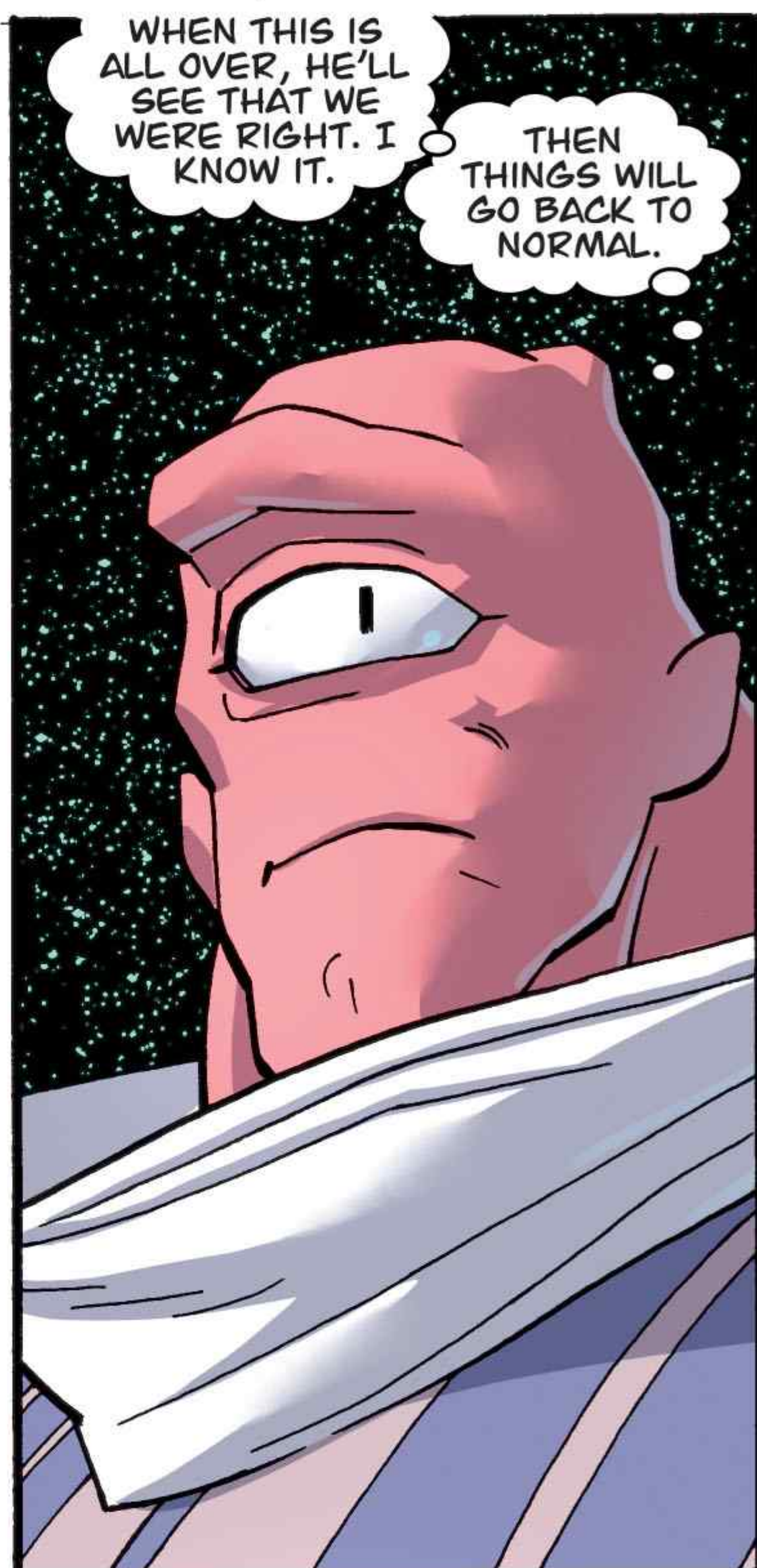


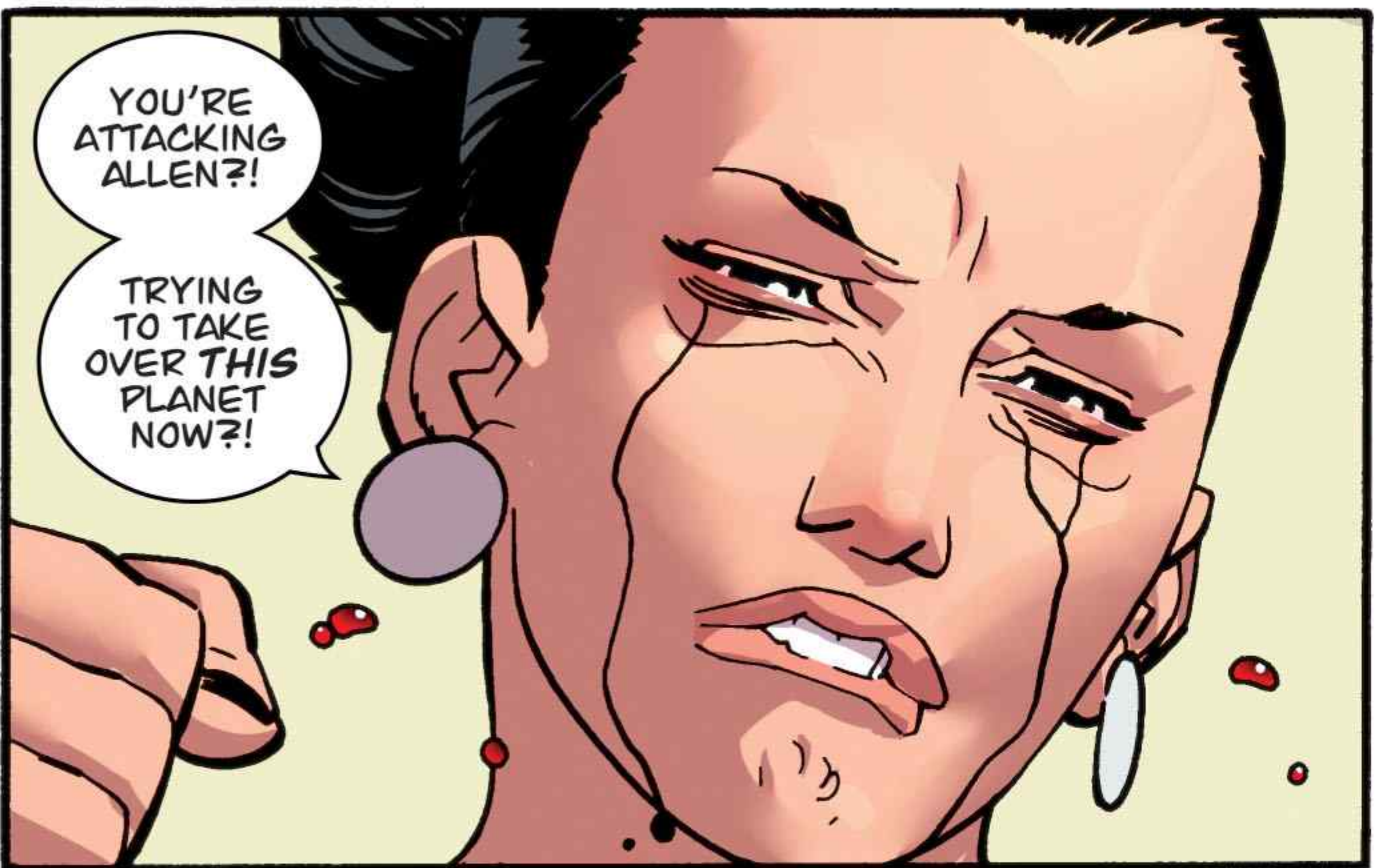
AND
PLEASE,
DON'T HOLD
ALL THIS
AGAINST--



DAMN.

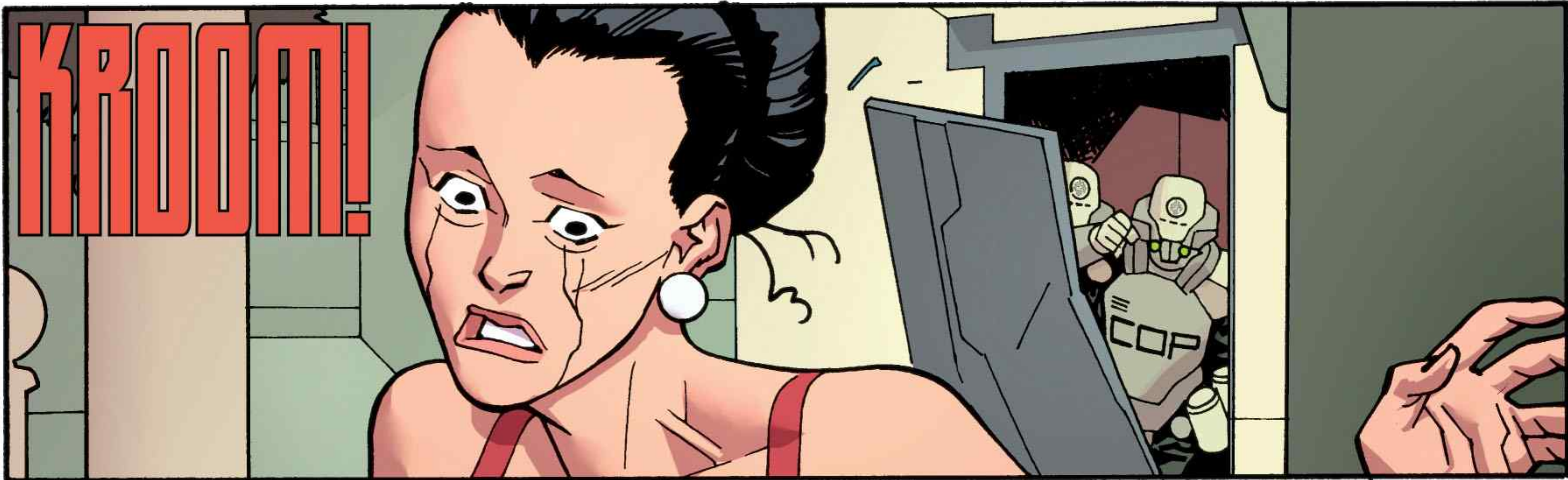




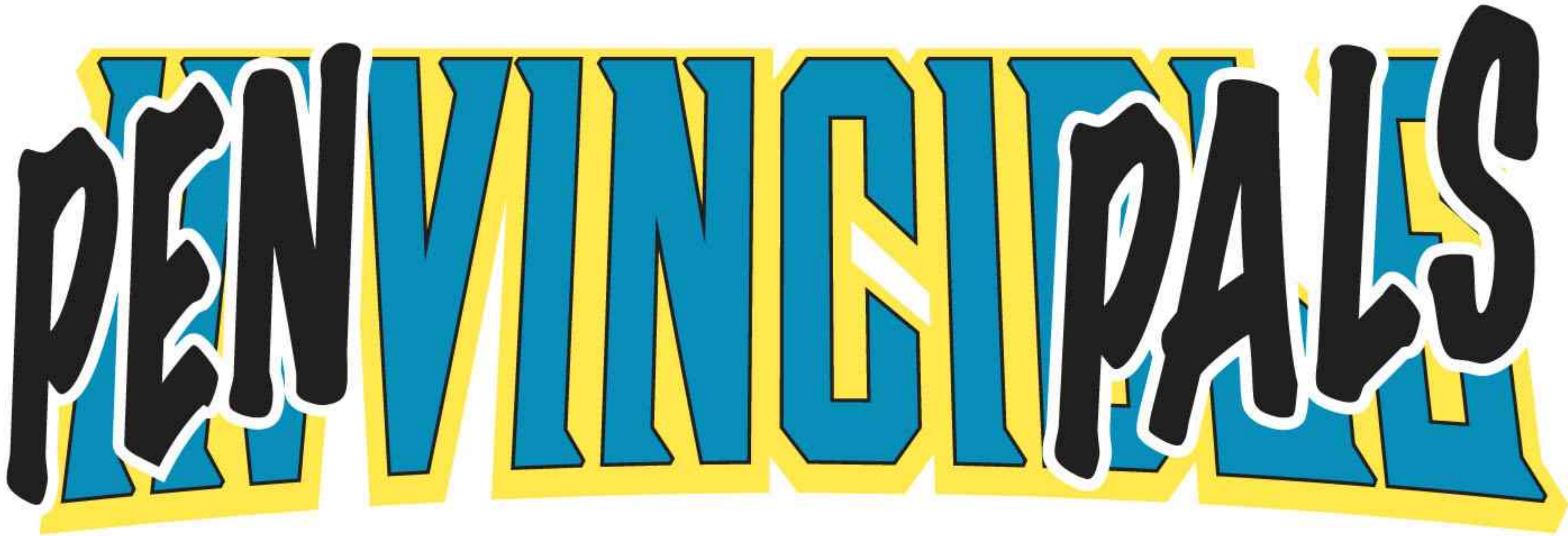








WRITE US @
INVINCIBLE@FUNKOTRON.COM



Heya Invincibles!

Your fearless Editor, Sina Grace here, happy to bring you a healthy dose of Cory Walker. Thanks dude, for stepping in and showing off your skills, while giving Ryan time to catch up. Also: big thanks to FCO Plascencia for returning to Invincible to handle coloring duties on Cory’s run.

Let’s dive into letters, we have some good’uns and I’m sick of talking about Cory Walker.

Hi, kids! Robert Kirkman here. Before we dive off into letter land--I'd like to take a moment to thank FCO Plascencia for his hard work and devotion on this series over the last few years. I discovered FCO on Jay Faerber and Jon Sommariva's excellent Image Comic GEMINI, which was a great book (like most every comic written by Jay Faerber). The art really stood out to me. Jon is a great artist with a really unique style and the coloring... that really blew me away.

I immediately contacted Jay to get the contact info for this FCO Plascencia character. At the time, we were doing a BRIT regular monthly series (that's available in trade, please buy it) and I needed a colorist to come onto issue 7 and color Nate Bellegarde. Nate is very picky, and rightly so, but I knew FCO had a style that would really elevate his work, and the two worked REALLY well together. Their work is contained in BRIT, Volume 3: FUBAR if you want to check it out. (Pssst, you want to check it out).

The work was so good, when Bill Crabtree, our esteemed original colorist decided to step down... FCO was my first choice to come in and take over this book. Ryan was blown away by what he was doing on BRIT and we were both thrilled to have FCO on board.

Colorists are an integral part of any creative team. An artist's work can look completely different depending on how it's colored. I have to say that I feel like Ryan's work really shined while it was colored by FCO. He really took the time to make this book look like a million bucks and I really appreciate all his hard work on the series.

I'm sorry to see him go, but he's having a blast on Batman, Spawn and Haunt. FCO wants to pursue other things and I know I speak for everyone involved in this series when I say I wish him great success in his new efforts. I'll be buying everything with his name on it and I suggest you give it a shot as well.

As sad as I am sad to see FCO go, he did a bang up job on Cory's two issues after all, I'm REALLY excited that John Rauch, who's been rocking and rolling on the book since issue 82 will be returning next month as our regular monthly colorist. Welcome aboard, John!

Don't screw it up!

After all that, I feel like I should write a similarly gushy bit about your friend and mine Cory Walker, but the good news is, Cory's not going anywhere and we'll be seeing him in these pages again before you know it. So screw you, Cory!

Let's answer that mail now, shall we?

Invincible Crew-

I have been a long time reader, but after reading Invincible #84 I felt I owed it to you guys to finally write in. This is the only book I pick up every month (?) that never disappoints me. So many other books from big name publishers have so much build up and hype, and then constantly fail to deliver. This is never the case with Invincible. Whether it is killing Angstrom Levy, the fallout from the Viltrumite War, Eve getting an abortion, or even Eve putting on a few pounds, the big surprises are actually always surprises.

That’s probably why we made it on MTV Geek’s Best Ongoing Series list of 2011!

A friend of mine handed me the first trade and I immediately loved it so started collecting issues around #60. I wanted everything up to what I had collected in trades but did not have the money. At NYCC I was talking to one of the people at the Image booth about the Invincible Compendium (which is awesome, wish I knew about it sooner). Me and the gentleman from the Image booth were trying to explain to somebody what Invincible was about and neither of us wanted to simply say “Oh, it’s a teenage superhero with superman like strength” because it is so much more than that and anyone who reads it knows it. That is exactly what is great about Invincible, it IS so much more than a superhero comic book, and it breaks boundaries and carves new paths in the comics industry every issue. It is the only book I am truly excited for.

Phew, just had to get that out. Keep up the great work guys.

Much love, Mark Covello

Starting off positive. Thanks, Mark! I wonder who it was who spoke to you?

Positive remarks about the book?! BORING!

Hello again, Invinci-Crew!

So after a long day of deep thought, Mark went home and caught himself a zombie flick, which was promptly turned off to discuss things with Eve. What I want to know is what movie would you suppose he was watching? Also, what are Mark and Eve’s favourite movies, respectively?

Sincerely,
Ryu @ SciFi in NC

Eve loves Troop Beverly Hills. This I know to be true.

Karate Dog, maybe?

Mark was watching Survival of the Dead... he's a hardcore Romero nut!

Hello Kirkman and Invincible crew!

Just to get my introduction out of the way, Invincible is the second comic title I’ve ever written to (the first was Savage Dragon and that was a couple of years ago). I have been reading Invincible monthly since about issue 48 with no plans to stop. Ever!... I hope for this letter to consist of equal parts praise as well as minor critique. ...so now, onto the two items I’d like to address.

#1. In the early issues of Invincible, one thing that kept me excited to keep reading and get the newest issue was your almost relentless sense of introducing so many new characters(both heroes and villains) from issue to issue. However, after reading the last dozen issues or so and very specifically the last four issues(which of course were all epic and awesome!), I would just like to be re-assured that invincible will not fall into the rouges-gallery-trappings that a lot of super hero comics concede to. Now, it is great to re-visit characters from the past and I know that is very important for character and plot development, but personally I've found that the magic of frequently meeting brand new characters from issue to issue has dwindled some. I anxiously await some new and crazy and fun and insanely original and humorous and serious and lighthearted and emotional and etc., etc.,etc. type of characters from the mind of Robert Kirkman! I would greatly appreciate any your thoughts about my thoughts on this subject.

Isn’t part of the fun with new characters that you get to actually watch them grow and develop a little bit? Robert’s been introducing a lot of characters, and setting them up in the right places for some major upcoming events... I feel like some of the impact would be lost if it was a new guy who destroyed Las Vegas, and is now teaming up with Mark for Things to Come.

If anything... MAYBE we put the new characters in Guarding the Globe instead of this series while Mark was in space during the Viltrumite war... but we've been introducing new characters. What about that alien criminal last issue? Huh? What about Gravitator? I still consider Dinosaur, Universa and Powerplex to be somewhat new. There will always be new characters popping up--but we do have to do things with all the characters we've already introduced from time to time.

#2. If there has to be an alternative colorist to FCO Plascencia, please oh please oh please let it be John Rauch! Nothing against Nikos Koutsis as I love his work on Savage Dragon, but I found that it did not fit the art style of Invincible nearly as well. John Rauch’s colors on the other hand...WOW! They give such a natural and unifying tone to the pencils and inking of Ottley and Rathburn. Issues 82 and 83 just have an absolutely classy look and feel. So, any plans to land a new long term colorist? John Rauch gets my vote. A rotating team of colorists might be necessary sometimes and can keep things interesting, but I was just curious about the future plans of the colors on the book.

John has been a fun addition to the team, and it looks like he’s along for the ride! I’m sure he’s glad to hear you like his work!

Let's not let John get a big head just yet... Bill and FCO both colored nearly fifty issues of the series. Let's let him get some full TPBs under his belt, first!

Thanks!
Jeff Waesch
Tulsa, OK

P.S./item #3. Its always a treat to see you on the iFanboy video show!

They’re good guys, and bring out the best in Robert.

Actually, I feel compelled to point out that I'm really the sole contributor to the entertainment value of those iFanboy interviews. Those guys are boring as hell... it's all me... point the glory this-a-way. (Does saying “this-a-way” make it clear that I'm joking?)

Hi

I was just writing this because I just finished reading issue #84 and there were complaints on how Universa's name was used, or not used. I for one completely agree with Mr. Kirkman’s approach as opposed to how Marvel and DC do it where every single time a character pops up, they have to tell me their life story. Frankly I feel just like Dinosaur was when Invincible told him his life story. Except, you know, I don’t turn into some sort of monster and stuff.

Or did you!?

Where are the Viltrumites?!? I know it’s kind of late but when I was reading the Viltrumite War story arc and I saw someone with a hearty mustache I would immediately think of them as Viltrumites. And my dad has a hearty mustache. . . .

So yeah, keep on keeping on.

Juan Ontiveros

First things first: your dad IS a Viltrumite. Why your powers haven't kicked in is beyond me.

Second things second: this current arc is all about the imminent death to all Viltrumites on Earth. So we'll be dealing with them even if we're not actually SEEING them.

Don't plan on seeing those guys any time soon. They're in hiding on Earth. We'll see them eventually, but let's let some time pass, okay?

Mr. Kirkman and Mr. Grace

First off, great issue and great series. I used Invincible and TWD as a gateway drug to get one of my friends into comics and it worked wonderfully. Of course after going to our local comic shop today, :cough: Legendary Comics in Stillwater, Ok :cough: he ask me if "This Kirkman guy just puts out books whenever he feels like it?" But I can't complain about the quality of your books.

Sigh... blame the editor. The Viltrumite War was quite taxing on us schedule-wise, but we've been trying to expedite our shipping us much as possible without offending retailers to get completely caught up. We should be back to our solicited dates by February/ March.

Or else!

Onto this issue. I am glad to see Chris getting some page time. He is an interesting character and a walking, talking good deed for Mark. Invincible is going to need all the good will he can get now that he has teamed up with Dinosaurus. Anyways, Numbered Questions!

1 Is the future where Mark takes over the world and then leaves The Immortal/Abraham Lincoln in charge still viable or have we avoided that timeline?

There's a possibility...

More than that, go back and read that issue again in a few months... there's a LOT of hints as to what will be happening in the book eventually in that story. None of that Immortal dialogue is just throwaway stuff I never plan on getting to.

2 What happened with those two guys with the time scooter, or whatever it was?

They're in New York, editing books for Mark Millar. Inside jokes! Robert?

GOOD ONE. They're heading up an Eddie Vedder cover band?

Their world was saved... we may never see them again! But... did they keep the declaration of independence after they stole it?! We'll never know!

3 Are the time scooter Kung Fu brothers going to show up now that Invincible is going dark? In my head they know Kung Fu. I don't know if that was really in the book.

Mark is going #dark? I don't think they know any martial arts whatsoever.

4 I like the two page spread of Invincible's head in this issue. My compliments to the art team, but story-wise it kinda sucked. A whole page for one word kinda feels cheap. That was more of a statement then a question.

You'll always be wrong on this one: Robert stands behind his double page head spreads. As do I. If I could, I would have a double page spread photo of me saying just that.

Well, I will admit that I have been doing them a bit, too often (look back a page or so in the story, heh?). But I DO love them! They're great for giving a moment impact. In the case of issue 84... that's a HUGE moment for Mark, realizing that Dinosaurus could be right. I thought it merited a big ol' spread.

5 If Mark is paralleling Cecil's story arc with the whole using villains to do good thing does that mean Invincible will become the new head of the Global Defense Agency?

Not a terrible thought, but not the right one.

6 Will Mark use his new position as head of the Global Defense Agency as a staging point to take over the world with his friend Dinosaurus?

Hmm, well when you put it that way...

It all makes sense you evil genius!
James Kephart II

Yes, Robert does have evil genius leanings...

Shhhhhh.

Dear Invinci-Crew,

OMG.....issue 84 was awesome and fun. Let me give some praise to the art team, you guys rock. I appreciate the hard you all put in each issue at the tender price of \$2.99. I'm a guy who craves superhero action in my comics Invincible has definitely challenged me as a reader and I thank you all for that. The characterization depicted in each panel is beautifully crafted....you're the man Ryan!

Let me not forget to give kudos to Mr. Rauch for your organic color work. If you don't mind me asking but which program do you use to color? I ask because each panel breathes in its own way....again great work John!

Photoshop!

Hey Cliff, I don't know you've been drinking but I definitely want some....lol. Your ink work comes off as if it's easy but when I look closely, I'm at awe of the finesse in the line work. Which brushes do you use?

Black ones!

Now for you Robert....how do you do it man? The fun I'm having whenever reading this book is unmatched! I love the twists and turns going on in Mark's life. I'm always theorizing where the series is going but you never fail to surprise me. YOU GUYS ARE F***** killing this title for a tender price of \$2.99!!! My fiance and I have always thought about collecting the read in Trade PB but I give in each and every time (lol)

when I see the title staring back at me at my Comic book shop. Thank you all for another great issue but before I go Robert I've got to ask you another question.....will we ever see a resurrection of the original Rex Splode? I miss him (with one tear leaving my right eye).

I don't know how Robert does it, but I can say that "It" does not include bringing Rex Splode back any time soon. Some deaths you have to honor.

Right! If we brought back Rex, this book would be as crappy as those OTHER super hero comics where death has no meaning.

#BigTwoRrrrips

Before I forget, Sina and Rus....you two rock at enforcing the easy to read fluidity of this title!!!!

INVINCIBLE IS THE BEST SUPERHERO COMIC BOOK IN THE UNIVERSE.....PERIOD.

-Tu-Kwon

That may be the best letter I've ever received in my time working on these letters columns.

Eh... I've read better. Not enough negativity.

Penvincipals,

Up until issue 84, I wasn't sold on John Rauch. His colors seemed too soft somehow, if that makes sense. I wasn't really liking the way he did lighting or blending either; it seemed like it lacked gradation. I'm totally sold now though. Mr. Rauch, you absolutely killed on Invincible #84! The two page spread of Invincible's face when he decides, "Dinosaurus was right," is absolutely stunning. I love FCO Plascencia, but I feel like, at the very least, this particular issue could not possibly have been done better by anyone other than Rauch.

Aww, are you blushing, John Rauch?

Now that I've got my praise for the coloring out of the way, I should mention that I'm really excited about the direction the story is taking. I feel like Invincible parallels The Walking Dead in that it pushes the limits of its genre by really following character development all the way through. In The Walking Dead, Rick and his band of survivors have basically worked through all the basic zombie apocalypse stuff and are really getting into what would happen next--rebuilding civilization. Invincible now seems to be moving past the basic superhero stuff into an exploration of the impact someone like Mark Grayson could have on the world. I can't wait to see wait to see where this story goes next, because unlike any other superhero book, I can't be too sure what's going to happen next.

Joseph Gray

You shan't be disappointed! Unless we lose John and hire a digital painter to do the book, then you might feel a bit weird.

Hmmmm.

Gentlemen,

Good to see you picking up the pace again with issue #84. I was feeling a little bored with the lull post Viltrumite War. I didn't expect the Dinosaurus team-up. Interesting direction to go in. I was sure Mark was going to hang it up the way things were going.

Questions:

1. Can we see what's up with the Viltrumites yet? Obviously you must have some cool stuff planned for them. Just don't make us wait too long!

Patience!

Yeah... be REEEEEAAAALLLLL patient.

2. Is Robot a clone? I don't recall and this thing where he's turning into Rex-Splode has me confused.

He was a little troll who transferred his consciousness in a Rex Clone body. He went by Rudy and then changed it to Rex after our hero died.

Yeah, I ran through the whole series of events in a previous issue's letters column... go check it out. Sina, what letters column was that?

It was last issue!

3. Is Nolan the only Viltrumite with half-breed kids? There's potential for some badass villains if not.

I'll never tell.

Just got Ryan's groovy art book in the mail this morning. Great stuff.

Super great.

Kevin

PS: Any progress on the ebook text justification thing?

We're still working with comixology to get that fixed!

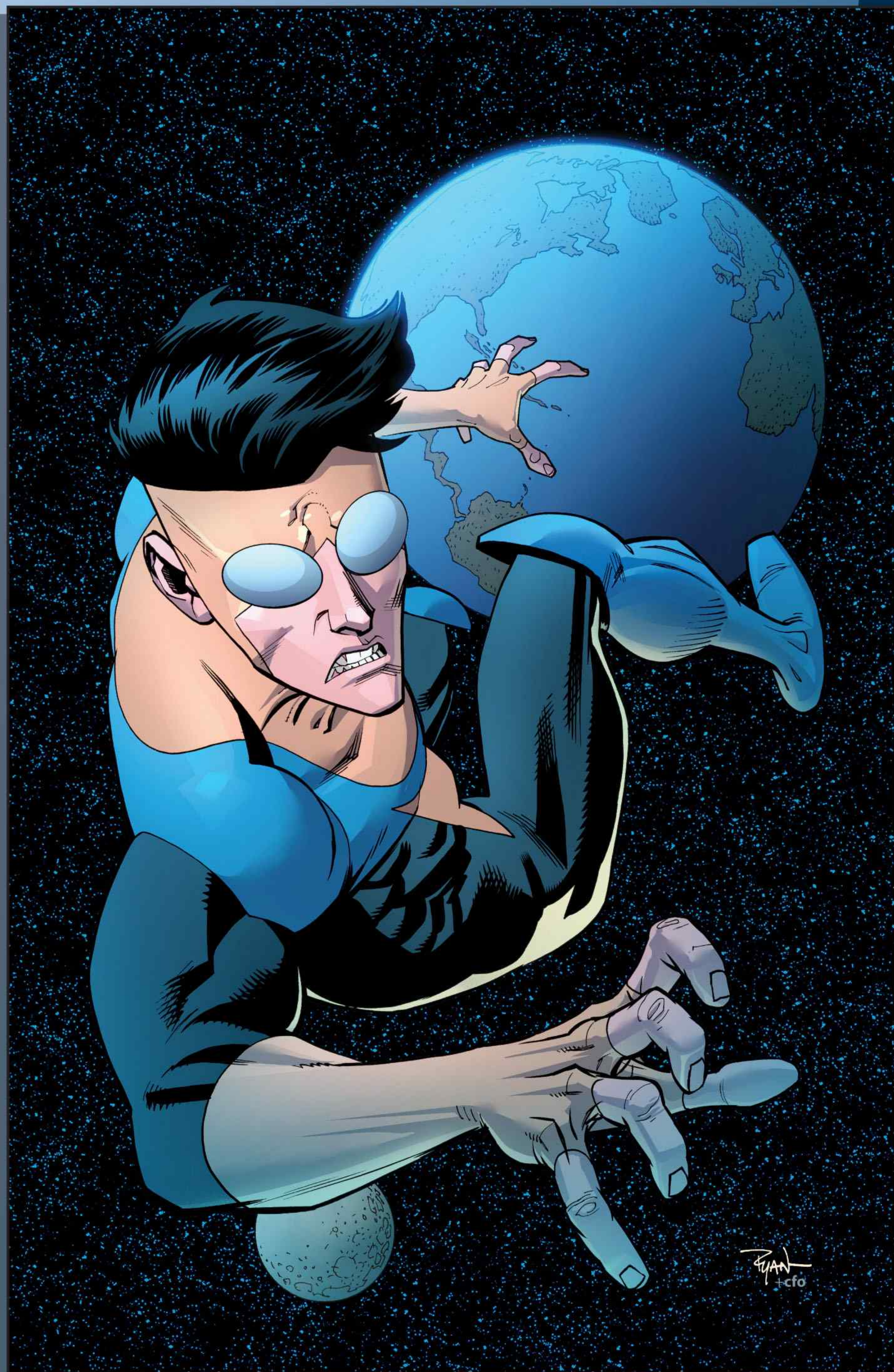
Okay, I'm done with Invincible—for 2011! See you all in the first week of 2012, where Ryan returns, and things heat up on Earth! Happy Holidaze,

-Sina Grace

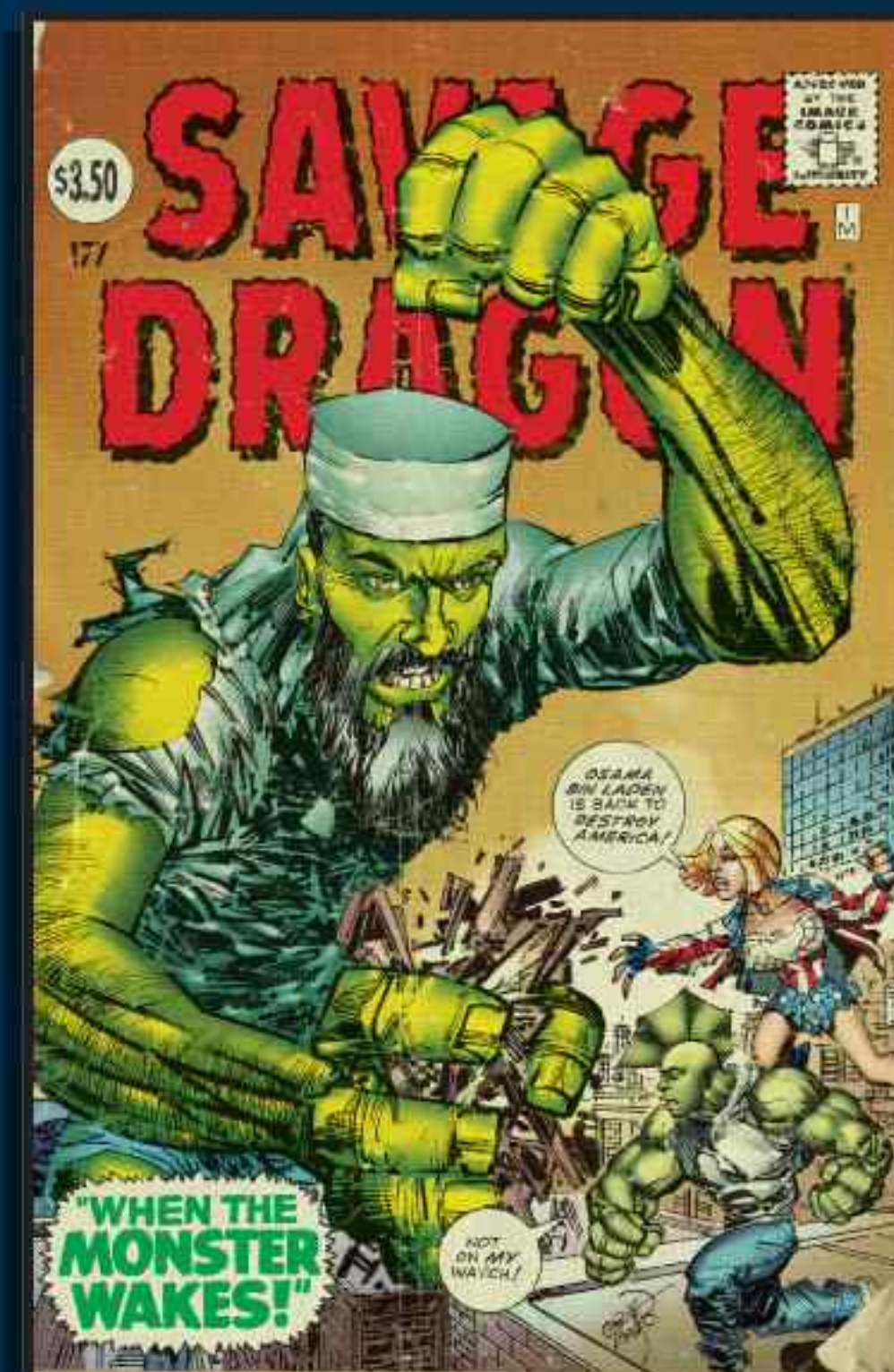
And in 2012... MORE ISSUES OF INVINCIBLE! I PROMISE! We're shooting for 12 monthly issues.

-Robert Kirkman

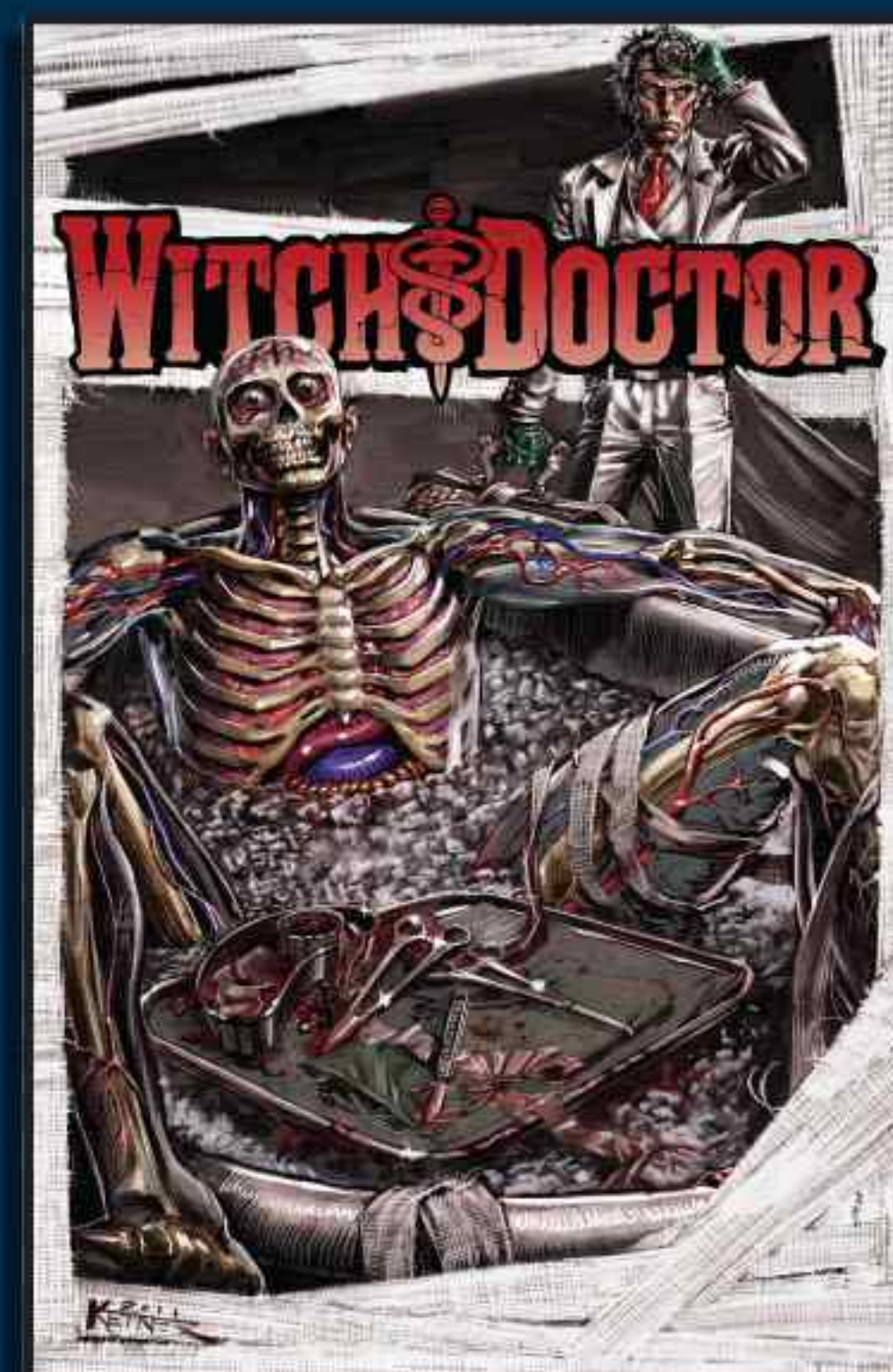
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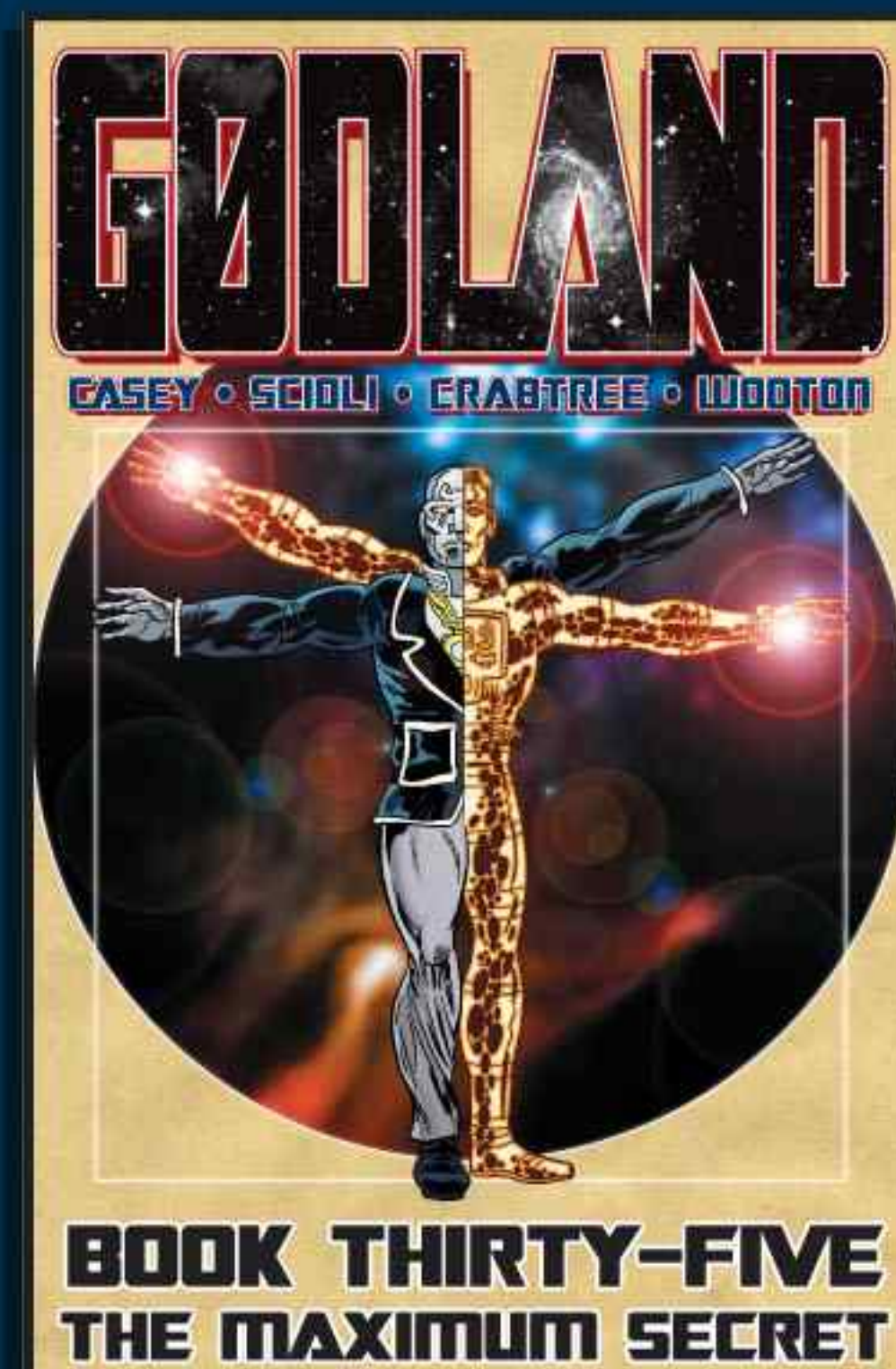
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The Third Degree:

RIAN HUGHES

IMAGE COMICS' MONTHLY Q&A SESSION

Londoner Rian Hughes began his career as a designer working for Smash Hits, i-D magazine and a series of record sleeve design companies. His early comic strip work appeared in the alternative press magazine *Escape*, and this led to work for Belgian art-house publisher Magic Strip. His first mainstream UK comic work was *Dan Dare* with Grant Morrison for Fleetway's short-lived *Revolver* title, and from there he moved to 2000AD, illustrating such series as *Really and Truly*, again with Morrison, and *Robo-Hunter* with Peter Hogan. Dividing his time between illustration and design, he has provided design, custom type and illustration for advertising campaigns, CD and record sleeves, book jackets and graphic novels, and numerous comic book logos for mainstream comic publishers such as DC Comics and Marvel. Recent publications include *Cult-ure: Ideas can be Dangerous* (Fiell) and *YESTERDAY'S TOMORROWS*, a collection of his comic work which was recently launched at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, and is now available from Image.

What are you working on right now?

Some illustrations on a burlesque theme for an upcoming book collection; a logo for young upstart musicians The Lipstick Melodies; the cover design for the manual of correct hat-doffing and butler baiting, *The Chap* magazine; logo designs for the reboot of a well-known comics line; and a sequel to *CULTURE: Ideas can be Dangerous*.

What's the best part of your job?

Creating beautiful things for appreciative clients.

What's the worst part of your job?

Being asked to spoil those beautiful things by clients who are visually tone-deaf, who make arbitrary changes and "improvements" that simply don't work.

How did you first discover comics?

Through a weekly British comic called *Countdown* that featured the talents of John M. Burns, Frank Bellamy and Mike Noble.

If you weren't working in comics, what would you be doing?

Working at the Large Hadron Collider as a particle physicist. The Earth-2 version of me studied physics instead of going to art school. He may harness dark matter; use it to build an interdimensional portal, and visit us soon.

What's the strangest thing a fan has ever said to you?

I have fans? Where? Are they cute? Can you introduce me?

What are you most likely to complain to an editor about?

The fact that a line of type should be 12.5 on 14pt, but has somehow been changed to 12 on 14pt and the kerning has been turned off. And that, yes, it does matter. Such things are of earth-shaking importance to us type design geeks. Even comic covers need to adhere to elementary design rules - please stick to a logical grid so things line up on a page, and from page to page, and don't just randomly throw elements together; don't reverse white type on a wide line length out of a detailed image or a photoshop texture and expect our eyes not to hurt; don't use 5 different fonts in wildly differing styles and sizes on one job; adding a chrome shine in Photoshop does not make a bad logo a good logo, you're simply doing what's known in the trade as 'turd polishing'; if you're trying to evoke a period, use the correct type style - Helvetica didn't exist in 1930; those free fonts are probably free for a reason... I'm getting carried away here, aren't I? Just apply some basic design common sense. I'll get of my soapbox now.

Who is the biggest influence on your work?

I respond to artists and designers who show an awareness of the overall structure of a piece, and then mess with that structure in an interesting manner. Monty Python, Alan Moore and Peter Saville all take one step further back from the job at hand, address our assumptions as to what it should look like, and see the wider picture that others miss or assume is a given. From a more stylistic point of view, I admire illustrators who show a healthy appreciation of design in their work and vice-versa - Serge Clerc, The Stenberg

Brothers, Roger Excoffon, Jean Carlu, Yves Chaland, Frank Bellamy, Ashley Havinden, Ever Meulen, and more lately Ashley Wood and Shane Glines.

What is the single work of which you're most proud?

I hope that work is yet to come. If it isn't, I'm already past my best and sliding into late-period McCartney territory. Not a pretty thought.

Own up to one of your guilty pleasures.

My work is my greatest pleasure. True, and yet probably something no-one should own up to...

What was the last comic book you bought?

Solipsistic Pop 4 at the London Comiket at the weekend.

Who would play you in a movie about your life?

Someone far more handsome than I am in real life. A young John Foxx, perhaps.

Pick three things you couldn't live without.

A pocket-sprung mattress, a well-stocked library and the love of close friends and family.

What's the strangest thing you have in your house?

Where to start... there are nothing but strange things in my house. Random example: I somehow ended up with Black Grape's NME Award for Single of the Year; a bronze fist giving the finger. A flirty hand-written note with hearts on from Geri Halliwell, perhaps?

When was the last time you laughed out loud?

"Greece is halting exports of taramasalata and hoomous due to the monetary crisis. It's a double-dip recession..."

What music are you listening to these days?

I'm lucky enough to be working with some bands whose work I genuinely rate. The Winchell Riots. Ultravox. Here in the studio, we often have BBC Radio 6 on quietly in the background.

What is your favorite film of all time?

It would have to be *Blade Runner*. Rutger's finest Hauer.

Who is your best friend?

I'm not telling, as I don't like to play favourites. They know who they are.

What is the worst advice you've ever received?

I'm not a great one for taking advice, and am trying to stop myself from giving it as well. I do remember meeting illustrator Brain Grimwood early in my career; who said "Ideas never go out of style". Now that's some good advice.

When was the last time you were truly frightened?

On a plane flying back to London from Muscat, Oman last year. The hydraulics failed and the plane started fishtailing violently. I looked out of the window and the end of the wing was on fire. We eventually made it back to Muscat by throttling the engines and turning the plane around, but that hour or so was the longest of my life.

Name someone you really admire and explain why.

Rather than an individual, I'd like to salute those cartoonists and artists who don't self-censor in the face of violent intimidation by certain pre-enlightenment religious thugs. While the comics fraternity have come together to protect it's First Amendment rights before, they seem to be (with a few notable exceptions) rather quiet this time around. Why? Maybe they don't fancy getting firebombed.

What would you like to see happen in comics in the next 12 months?

No more crossovers, please. Stories I can pick up and understand without reading a dozen other titles first.

What the world needs now is...

A nice cup of tea and a neck rub.

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Question of the Month

What's your favorite new trend in comics?

"The widening of readership. Ads for comics on TV and in subways. AMC shows and Apple products inviting a whole new generation of readers to comic shops."

Nathan Edmondson

THE ACTIVITY, WHO IS JAKE ELLIS?

"I like that a lot of young artists are both penciling and inking their own work. Sometimes coloring, too! It's not new, by any means, but it's a trend that looks to be on to be on an upswing. DIY FTW."

Tradd Moore

THE STRANGE TALENT OF LUTHER STRODE

"It must be VOODOO ROMANCE, spin a romance yarn, toss in a helping of creep flesh, and you've got a sure-fire hit book on your hands. Well, that's what I told Dave Hine."

Shaky Kane

*SHAKY KANE'S MONSTER TRUCK,
BULLETPROOF COFFIN*

"I'm excited about more books being released digitally the same day as print. It's a big step in getting comics in front of as large an audience as possible."

Ron Marz

WITCHBLADE, SHINKU

"I don't know if I can identify a new trend, but I like the releases of old material for a new generation of readers. I just got our family some old Donald Duck books and found the classic hard cover Tin Tin volumes."

Doug Tennapel

RATFIST, CREATURE TECH

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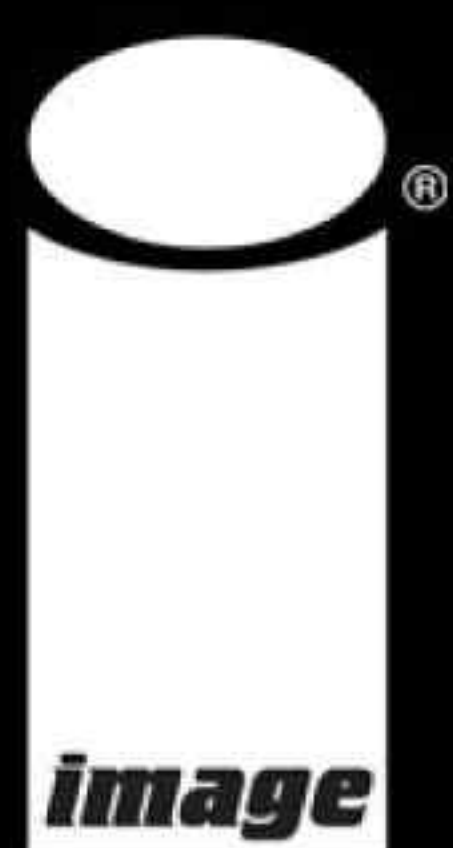


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